Mahler: Symphony No.10 in F Sharp (Unfinished)

Transcript of the broadcast to be followed with the tracklisting in the CD booklet.

by Deryck Cooke

[1] When Mahler died, in 1911, he left behind him three works in manuscript: *The Song of the Earth*, the Ninth Symphony – and the Tenth. *The Song of the Earth* and the Ninth Symphony, being complete, were performed and published soon after Mahler's death; but the Tenth, being unfinished, remained a mystery, until in 1924 the manuscript was published in facsimile. That year, the first and third movements were performed, and in 1951 an edition of them was published. The other three movements have been neither performed nor published to the present day.

This means that the Tenth Symphony has still remained a mystery, to all intents and purposes. The two published movements can only be fully understood in relation to the rest of the work; but this has been locked away in the scarcely legible pages of Mahler's manuscript.

There are cogent reasons why we should hear and understand all that we can of Mahler's last, unfinished symphony. *The Song of the Earth* and the Ninth Symphony are fascinating works, in two ways. They reveal a man of courageous but tormented spirit in the face of his approaching premature death, and also a boldly adventurous composer exploring new worlds of sound. We're bound to wonder whether Mahler, in his last days, found any salvation from the despair that threatened to overwhelm him, and in what way he pursued the stylistic and formal explorations of his last two complete works. The Tenth Symphony is the key to all this – which is why I've tried to bring it to life in audible form.

I'd like to make clear at the start that the score I've prepared is in no sense a 'completion' of the symphony, but only an orchestral realisation of what must be regarded as Mahler's first, unrevised draft. But this first draft is more comprehensive than has hitherto been believed. After spending months deciphering the facsimile of Mahler's chaotic manuscript, I found it to be a full length sketch of a five-movement symphony in F sharp, with continuity from beginning to end, however tenuous in places.

To prepare it for performance involved a few conjectural readings, some conjectural filling-in of missing notes and chords, and a lot of conjectural orchestration. But I've preserved Mahler's characteristic texture and spacing almost throughout, and added nothing which affects his essential thought. In the few places where coherence could only have been preserved by doing Mahler's actual composing for him, I've simply left gaps. But we shall hear about an hour's music out of some 65 minutes; and I believe this will justify itself by providing for the first time a comprehensive view of the whole work, and particularly of the last two superb movements.

Mahler's manuscript consists of five main folders. The first is marked 'I. Adagio', and it contains the large-scale movement in F sharp major which is often performed; it's laid out in full score, and it's almost fully orchestrated. I've rejected the published version, since it contains many unwarranted additions – mainly holding notes and chords for woodwind and horns – which obscure Mahler's pellucid texture and orchestration. Incidentally, this is not the work of Ernst Krenek as is generally supposed: both he and Mrs Mahler have declared that he only made a fair copy of the manuscript, and that the additions were made afterwards by some unknown hand. I've simply gone back to the original: we shall hear the Adagio tonight practically as it stands in Mahler's manuscript.

Turning to the actual music, this movement has been generally misunderstood in isolation from the rest of the symphony. It's been regarded as a kind of extension of the valedictory finale of the Ninth Symphony – as Mahler's last farewell. In fact, it's no farewell at all, as we shall hear, but the preludial movement of a new symphony, raising questions which are resolved by the later movements. In view of this, Berthold Goldschmidt is adopting a rather more flowing tempo than the funereal one previously considered appropriate.

Three main elements in this movement should be noticed. First, the opening Andante theme for unison violas [2]; Mahler brings this back at the climax of the Finale. Second, the main Adagio theme, for violins [3]; this is echoed by the *Ländler* theme in the scherzo which follows. And, lastly, the extraordinary climax – a sustained dissonant chord for full orchestra, piling up nine notes of the chromatic scale in thirds [4]; this has a harmonic influence on the fourth movement, and will return, in its original form, at the climax of the Finale.

The second folder is marked 'II. Scherzo'; but Mahler originally marked it '2. Scherzo – Finale'. It seems certain that he did this before he'd conceived the last three movements – in other words that he originally intended a symphony in two movements only.[1] This is borne out by the fact that the two movements are in the same key, and complement one another in character. So, as in the case of other Mahler symphonies, we have a work in two parts; and this big symphonic scherzo counterbalances the opening Adagio and brings the first part of the symphony to an end.

Like the Adagio, it's laid out in full score; but the orchestration's incomplete, the texture's sometimes deficient, and there are three passages which are only vaguely sketched in. But three-quarters of this movement is sufficiently coherent to make its impact, and we shall hear this in four separate sections.

The first section comprises the scherzo and the first trio, played continuously. The weighty scherzo material introduces an entirely new feature into Mahler's

[1] For a discussion of this see footnote 2 of the booklet notes. [Colin Matthews]

music. He was always fond of changing the time-signatures, but here the time-signature changes nearly every bar. This technical procedure, which anticipated *The Rite of Spring* by three years, gives a remarkable terseness to the music [5]. The falling octave [6] should be noted, as it will recur in the fourth movement.

The first thirty bars will be played as they stand, but when the first big climax approaches, the texture becomes deficient. Here's the passage in question, played by the orchestra exactly as Mahler wrote it [7].

It's obvious that, just before the climax, Mahler merely wrote in the main contrapuntal lines, and left the harmony to be filled in later. Acting on a hint supplied by one bar of horn chords, I've added some basic harmonies on horns and trombones, which allow the climax to make its effect, without, I believe, intruding on Mahler's essential thought. So, with some additional woodwind doubling of the strings and some essential percussion, the passage is realised like this [8].

This climax leads straight into the first trio, which will be played practically as it stands – gay, pastoral music, mainly for woodwind and horns. It's eventually interrupted by the return of the scherzo, and here the first extract ends, since the texture becomes quite sketchy.

But after only twenty-four bars, we pick up the thread again with the second extract – the second trio, a beautiful slow *Ländler*, which will also be played practically as it stands. Its melody echoes the main theme of the first movement [9].

This second trio is also interrupted by the return of the scherzo, and here the second extract ends. Unfortunately, an important passage of some 160 bars has to be omitted – a very roughly sketched development of all the main themes in conjunction. The third extract begins at the end of this: a solo trumpet strikes in with a beautiful slow version of the main scherzo-theme, and this begins a ravishing slow episode. Most of this will be played as it stands; but for a few bars, the texture's again deficient [10].

That obviously needs some harmonic support – which pretty well suggests itself. I've taken the preceding trombone harmonies supporting the trumpet – a bare fifth followed by a dominant seventh – and given them to bassoons and clarinets [11].

This slow episode breaks off abruptly, and so does the third extract, since the next fifty bars, working up speed towards the conclusion, are only roughly sketched in. Then follows the fourth and final extract – the brief but brilliant coda. Here I've had to fill out Mahler's basic orchestration with a good deal of doubling, and add a few notes to stiffen the texture. At the very end of this movement, the horns whoop out the *Ländler* theme, and there's a characteristic final bang [12].

Thus, the first part of the symphony ends with the main theme of the opening Adagio transformed into a shout of joy. All this is far from the despairing, valedictory mood of the Ninth Symphony.

Part 2 takes us into a different world altogether. The third folder is marked 'III. Purgatorio'. This is a short movement in B flat minor, delicately scored for the most part; but it acts as the psychological and thematic source of the two big remaining movements.

Only the first thirty bars are orchestrated by Mahler, the rest being in four-stave score with detailed indications of instrumentation. I've largely accepted the anonymous editor's convincing realisation of this, in the published version, though I've cut out several unwarranted additions to Mahler's texture.

The title, 'Purgatorio', isn't to be taken in any blood-curdling sense. Mahler was steeped in Dante, and his brief movement reflects certain aspects of Dante's Purgatorio – gentleness, an acute regret, a sense of hope – and, naturally, expiatory suffering.[2] The main material has a childlike innocence and the main theme is a plaintive little melody [13].

This melody, in its full form, contains the thematic germs of the last two movements. The first [14] and the second [15] form much of the basis of the finale; the third [16] permeates the fourth movement. The agitated central section of the 'Purgatorio' introduces one new idea – a brooding theme of five descending notes [17]; against this, in the manuscript, Mahler wrote the words 'Death; Transfiguration'.[3] Later it rises twice to a great passionate outburst [18], and against this Mahler wrote the first time 'O God, why have you forsaken me?', and the second time 'Thy will be done'. At these points, the purgatorial significance of the movement becomes clear. This theme also, in both versions, is used as a basic motive in the finale.

The opening section returns, and the movement seems to be approaching a quiet, but radiant conclusion – like a sunlit remembrance of childhood happiness – when there's a sudden nightmarish upheaval, and a final statement of the figure which will permeate the next movement [19].

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[2] Cooke was not aware that Mahler's old friend Siegfried Lipiner (1856-1911) had published a sequence of poems under the title 'Il Purgatorio' as part of his *Buch der Freude* (1880) [C.M.].

[3] Mahler's ambiguous annotation '*Tod! Verk!*' is here interpreted by Cooke as indicating '*Tod! Verklärung!*'. In another sketch not available to Cooke Mahler wrote '*Todesverkündigung*', implying a reference to the 'Annunciation of death' in Act II of Wagner's *Die Walküre*.
[C.M.].

I shall now briefly describe the last two movements together, before dealing with each of them in detail. The fourth folder has no title except for the number 'IV', but this is clearly a large-scale second scherzo, in Mahler's demonic vein. It uses progressive tonality, opening in E minor and ending in D minor. The fifth folder is marked simply 'V. Finale'. And this is another large-scale movement – Lento–Allegro–Lento – which also uses progressive tonality: it's mainly in the key of D minor reached by the preceding movement, but eventually moves back to the F sharp major of the opening Adagio.

These last two movements are entirely in four-stave score, and I've conjecturally realised them in full score myself. It might seem folly to attempt to orchestrate for Mahler; but that isn't exactly what I've done. There are indications of instrumentation – very few, but very significant – and in any case the music is obviously conceived in terms of orchestral sound. By studying every aspect of it – the compass and character of melodic lines, the implicit tone-colour of harmonies, and so on – I believe that I've divined the general orchestration Mahler had in mind, to within about eighty per cent. Naturally, one can't go on from here to conjecture Mahler's whole fascinating new world of sound; but I've tried to imitate his orchestral style as far as possible, by studying his other scores. I'm greatly indebted to Berthold Goldschmidt, who suggested many striking improvements to my first draft, in the matter of significant detail; but the responsibility for the whole general lay-out is mine. We shall hear examples in a few moments.

The fourth movement is one of Mahler's most fantastic conceptions. From the Purgatorio we descend into the Inferno, as it were. Mahler didn't provide a title, but the diabolical mood of the music is ratified by the words he wrote on the cover of the folder: 'The devil is dancing this with me; madness, seize me and destroy me'.

We shall hear four-fifths of this movement, in three extended sections. The first comprises the opening statement of scherzo and trio. Although there's no tempo marking, the scherzo is clearly a ferocious *Allegro pesante*, in much the same vein as the opening *Trinklied* of *The Song of the Earth*. The movement begins with a motto of three chords related to the great dissonant chord of the first movement, and for these, Mahler specified wind, horns and trombones respectively [20].

Against these chords are set two violent thematic figures: the falling octave of the first scherzo and the motive that ended the 'Purgatorio' [21]. These are then converted into the furious main theme [22]. Since this theme can only be for violins, I've given the opening figures to violas and cellos, to set off the violins' entry. And on Berthold Goldschmidt's advice, I've added flutter-tonguing trumpets to the opening wind chord, as in *The Song of the Earth*, and brought in side drum and xylophone, as in the Sixth Symphony. For the rest, I've tried to imitate

Mahler's characteristic shrillness. This is how the opening of the movement has been scored [23].

The scherzo leads straight into the trio, a satirically cheap waltz-theme, which I've tried to score in Mahler's characteristic beer-garden style. And at the end of this, the first extract stops.

But the gap is only ten bars: a very sketchy link back to the much-modified restatement of both scherzo and trio – which forms the second extract. Here the two elements intermingle in conflict: the scherzo becomes very much like certain lamenting passages in the *Trinklied* of *The Song of the Earth*, while the waltzing trio blossoms and expands symphonically. At this point in the manuscript, the waltz-tune has a counter-theme and mere block-harmonies. Taking the scherzo of the Fifth Symphony as a model, I've given the counter-theme to second violins and horn, and set out the block harmonies as a Viennese waltz accompaniment [24].

After the restatement of the trio, the second extract breaks off, since the next hundred bars – a subsidiary central episode – aren't properly composed.

For the last extract, we pick up the very end of this passage, for the final restatement of scherzo and trio. Here there's a characteristic example of the way in which I've had to evolve a full symphonic texture out of a mere hint. For the restatement of the trio, the manuscript has only the upper melodic line and the bass, for a few bars. Here's the beginning of the passage as it stands, played by the strings [25].

Mahler obviously here meant to recapitulate the passage we heard before, no doubt with counter-theme and waltz-rhythm. But the waltz-melody has been changed slightly, so I've had to modify both counter-theme and harmony a little, to fit the new context [26].

After the trio has run its course this time, there's a doom-like climax, and the movement darkens over and moves towards its sinister conclusion: the waltz-music fades away like a spectre, on percussion alone – anticipating by seven years Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*, where the Devil also dances off at the end to percussion alone. Mahler has specified this scoring clearly: the final shadowy waltz-rhythms are marked 'timpani' – obviously involving two players – and later 'drum with cymbal'. And the final, isolated note is marked 'completely muffled drum, *sforzando'*. Mahler actually heard this last, deathly sound at a funeral in New York, and was so profoundly moved by it that he incorporated it here. Psychologically speaking, it marks the lowest point of the Symphony, from which the finale begins a slow, painful ascent.

The Finale is in three parts – slow introduction, allegro, and much-transformed restatement of the introduction. The introduction opens with the muffled drum-

stroke that had ended the scherzo; then the 'Purgatorio' motives appear, lugubriously, in the bass, the progress of the music being continually halted by strokes on the muffled drum. Acting on Mahler's few hints of orchestration, I've scored this whole passage for brass and low woodwind. But out of the darkness rises an ethereal melody, marked for flute, over harmonies which can only be for lower strings.

After this, the entry of the first violins is specified, *piano pianissimo*, for a new melody, breathing hope, and the music swells gradually to a broad, ecstatic hymn of joy. But this is cut off brutally in mid-stream by the return of the muffled drum and the gloomy brass music.

This sudden collapse gives rise to the desperate main Allegro, which is rather in the mad, cynical mood of the Rondo-Burleske of the Ninth Symphony: its darting main theme is made up of 'Purgatorio' motives [27]. There's a contrasting idea – a satirical version of the gloomy five-note 'Purgatorio' motive [28]; and this eventually transforms itself into a big, confident romantic theme. This passage provides an apt example of the way I've occasionally filled out bits of deficient texture and orchestrated the result. The new theme is in octaves [29]; and it has a counter-theme, also in octaves [30]; but for harmony there's only a single bass-note in the first bar. Here's the passage as it stands, played by the strings [31].

It isn't difficult to conjecture the missing harmony: as in a similar case in the Sixth Symphony, Mahler would probably have used two basic chords in a logical progression [32].

But the context, and Mahler's marking of *fortissimo*, indicate a full orchestral tutti, in his characteristic style: violins and woodwind on the upper theme, horns and trumpets on the lower one, and trombones and lower strings on the harmonies [33].

The frenzied main Allegro material returns and holds the field, despite various attempts to dispel it; until, eventually, it's swept out of existence by the return of the great dissonant *fortissimo* chord of the first movement. Against this is thrown a figure which is scarcely legible in the manuscript: it's either this one from the finale's Introduction [34], or the main Allegro motive derived from it [35]. I've chosen the latter as best suiting the ferocity of the climax, and given it to the brass.

When this chord leaves off, a high note is left hanging on, marked 'trumpet', and the opening viola theme of the whole symphony enters, marked 'horn'. The wheel has come full circle: the transformed restatement of the finale's Introduction begins, *pianissimo*.

This restatement ignores the lugubrious opening of the movement, and takes up the hopeful violin theme. And here there's a passage which provides an example

of how whole sections of the music score themselves. In the manuscript, it's essentially a five-part texture, with certain melodic and harmonic gaps in the lower parts. Here it is, as it stands, played by the strings [36].

This is entirely coherent in essentials, but slightly deficient in detail; and what's chiefly lacking is a low sustained octave on the dominant. Here's the realisation of the full texture: the cellos will set the octave going before the other parts enter [37].

But this isn't string music. The melodic bass-line lies too low for cellos, and the basses alone can't give it 'edge'; and in any case the strings have to enter at the point where that example ends. What instrumentation did Mahler have in mind? The feel of one particular bar [38] brought to my mind the solemn sound of Wagner's music for horns and tubas in the *Ring*. And the sustained low octave is of the type commonly written for second and fourth horns. Furthermore, the bass tuba is the only instrument which can articulate the melodic bass-line clearly; and the two upper parts form a characteristic dialogue for first and third horn. So the passage scored itself for four horns and tuba, with the first clarinet on the obbligato sixth part in the first few bars – and what had at first sight seemed a rather insignificant passage sprang to noble life in its true brass sonority [39].

That wonderful modulation into the introduction's violin theme swings the symphony back at last to the home key of F sharp major.

The closing pages rise to the highest level of passionate affirmation, as all the violins, firsts and seconds, give out the introduction's flute theme *fortissimo* – Mahler specified this scoring. But the movement gradually attains to a great serenity of spirit, touched by resignation. But unlike the endings of *The Song of the Earth* and the Ninth Symphony, this music isn't a valediction, but a kind of benediction: the troubled 'Purgatorio' motives undergo one final, blissful transformation; and at the very end the falling five-note motive swells out and dies away again like a great sigh of contentment at finding peace at last. The Finale has risen out of the Inferno, as it were, back through Purgatorio into Paradiso.

Over the final bars Mahler wrote an avowal of undying devotion to his wife; so it would seem that in the end he found salvation from bitterness and despair through the strength of human love.