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Unveiling Musical Production: Strauss, Mahler and Commodity Fetishism in the Late Nineteenth Century

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This article locates social relationships within late-nineteenth-century German orchestral music by examining orchestration practices and aesthetics. Wagner's innovations in tone colour, Liszt's use of programmes, and Hanslick's formalism all took attention away from orchestra performers and forged a more direct relationship between audience and composer. This article argues that commercial exchange of serious music displaced social relationships between composer, performer and audience into aesthetic dictums. In particular, the widely agreed upon subordination of orchestration and colour to compositional 'content' was a manifestation of the social subordination of performers to composers and resulted in the decreased visibility of performers to consumers.

In ultimately breaking from both New German and formalist conventions, Strauss's Don Juan and Mahler's First Symphony brought unwanted attention to orchestration and a renewed focus on performance and performers. In contrast to Wagner's use of doublings, which created timbres without clear instrumental provenance, the orchestration choices of Strauss and Mahler emphasize distinctions between instruments and themes, further highlighting the virtuosic demands they place on performers. Strauss and Mahler made performers into co-producers of their music and raised orchestral colour to the status of content. By employing Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, which Adorno himself largely obscures, this article goes beyond Adorno's and Dahlhaus's analysis of the 'emancipation of colour' to show how concert consumption objectified social relations and hierarchies as issues of mere aesthetic form, while compositions themselves became imbued with life-like subjectivity.

Upon first hearing Richard Strauss's *Don Juan* and Gustav Mahler's First Symphony, music critics were aghast by the bold orchestration and distinct timbre. Theodor Helm called *Don Juan* 'a colouristic masterpiece … but no more', an apt distillation of the critical reactions to both compositions.[1] These breakthrough works established their promising, young composers as masters of tone colour and sound effects. However, such technical achievements could not compensate for what contemporaries perceived as a lack of 'content' – melodic innovation, thematic development, poetic ideas and, ultimately, aesthetic value. In the late nineteenth century, supporters and detractors of programme music, for all their embittered disputes, heartily agreed that colour was not content, but its handmaiden, duty bound to serve and deliver said content. This aesthetic consensus

[1] Theodor Helm, 'Concerte', *Deutsche Zeitung*, 12 Jan. 1892, 1.

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did not merely reinforce a hierarchical relationship between the compositional 'things' of orchestration and theme, but between people, specifically orchestra performers and composers. By breaking from late-nineteenth-century orchestration and listening practices, which emphasized the labour of composers to exclusion of that of players, Strauss and Mahler brought renewed, unwanted attention to performance and performers.

In *Nineteenth Century Music* Carl Dahlhaus identifies the gradual 'emancipation of timbre' as one of the 'decisive evolutionary features of the age'. Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner – the celebrated triumvirate of the New German School – freed orchestration, or so Dahlhaus asserts, 'from its subservient function of merely clarifying the melody, rhythm, harmony and counterpoint of a piece, and gave it an aesthetic raison d'être and significance of its own'.[2] However, as Adorno observes, the new compositional attention to tone colour was more a pseudo-liberation, especially in the case of Wagner, whose innovative orchestration ultimately elided the distinct character of individual instruments. In the quest for seamless, auditory totality, Wagner's music appears to the consumer as unproduced, the process and people behind its production having been functionally erased. Given how 'performances of the players are absorbed into the overall effect',[3] Adorno alights on Wagner's tone colour to assess the commodity qualities of his music, which 'obliterates the traces of living labour, of the individual human being'.[4] Despite hinting at Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, Adorno, however, never properly addresses it, remaining instead fixated on Wagner's concealment of musical production, not the ramification of such practices on social relations.[5]

Nevertheless, Adorno's analysis of Wagnerian orchestration provides an excellent point of entry into the commodity qualities – and even commodity fetishism – of late-nineteenth-century orchestral music more generally. Liszt's use of programmes and Hanslick's formalism shared with Wagner's epoch-defining orchestration the tendency to veil musical performance. Indeed, all the major trends of the 1850s served to further shift the locus of musical artistry from performers to composers, a process well underway and most evident in the relentless attacks on virtuosi in the preceding era.[6] For Wagner, as for Liszt, Brahms and their supporters, the quite overt subservience of orchestration to a transcendent notion of content was indicative of changing relationships between composer, performers and listeners at mid-century. Such concealment of musical

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[2] Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989): 243.

[3] Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 2005): 63.

[4] Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*, 69.

[5] Concerning Adorno's essay 'On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', Henry Klumpenhouwer notes that 'Adorno's critique does not engage fruitfully with the themes engaged in Marx's (or Freud's) conception of fetish'. Something similar could be said about *In Search of Wagner*. See Henry Klumpenhouwer, 'Commodity-Form, Disavowal, and Practices of Music Theory', in *Music and Marx: Ideas, Practice, Politics*, ed. Regula Burckhardt Qureshi (New York: Routledge, 2002): 37.

[6] In explaining how the composer 'emerged as the central figure around whom all the relationships of the ideal concert revolved', David Gramit has noted how virtuoso performers were seen as distracting audiences from the musical work itself. Their 'presence undermined the work's proper centrality'. David Gramit, *Cultivating Music: The Aspirations, Interests, and Limits of German Musical Culture, 1770–1848* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2002): 26, 143.

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production, which was not necessarily intentional, facilitated the conscious goal of forging a more direct relationship between audience and composer, both of whom benefited from the ongoing side-lining of performance. Composers garnered a larger share of musical value (aesthetic and economic), and connoisseurs of serious music got the impression they were consuming – exchanging their own labour value and comparing social status with – the intellectual labour of the artist-composer rather than that of the handicraft-instrumentalist. And yet, through the power of commodity fetishism, these profound social changes within nineteenth-century music were primarily experienced as mere issues of form, most evident in debates about the relationship between orchestration and content.

With the premieres of Strauss's *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony in 1889 the sound of individual instruments was not so neatly 'absorbed into the overall effect', as Adorno said of Wagner. In many respects, Strauss and Mahler built on Wagner's orchestration practices and Liszt's symphonic poems, particularly in the frequent use performance indicators, an unprecedented deployment of timpani, greater variations in timbre and heavy demands of orchestra members, all of which resulted in music with distinct tone colours that critics found overly ornamental. But in their 1889 premieres, Strauss and Mahler also departed from New German tradition in two crucial respects. First, Strauss and Mahler constructed a far looser relationship between music and extra-musical texts, which shifted audience focus from the programmatic content to the performance of colourful, polyphonic music. Additionally, *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony rarely employ the kind of doublings typical of Wagner's orchestration, only using such 'blended' timbre to underscore a passage's harmonic resolution. The more 'unblended' orchestration of Strauss and Mahler tends to emphasize distinctions between instruments, a practice that brought attention to the often-virtuosic performances of players, not just the content-producing imagination of composers. As Wagner's orchestration bears traces of mid-century, factory-like social hierarchies, so also Strauss's *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony mediate in their compositional structures the *fin-de-siècle* ascendence and increased management of labour.

Unmoored from precise literary representation, and oscillating in and out of Wagnerian euphony, Strauss's and Mahler's orchestration is far more 'emancipated' and autonomous than that of the New Germans. Colour becomes content and performance lays claim to artistry. Strauss's and Mahler's more complete emancipation of colour clashed with nineteenth-century dictums about form, which were ultimately also about relationships between composers, performers and audiences. And in the controversies provoked by *Don Juan*, Mahler's First Symphony and Liszt's symphonic poems, one can even see commodity fetishism in action, whereby consumptive practices brought art objects alive, while reifying social relations as interactions between things.

As with many of Marx's concepts, commodity fetishism is deceptively simple, frequently misconstrued and dependent on a labour theory of value. It does not refer to desire as in a Freudian fetish in which a part of a person or object is desired to the exclusion of the whole. The fetish Marx speaks of is the sacred or magical object, the totem, which all products become when exchanged as commodities. In the first chapter of *Capital*, he famously writes,

> A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own

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> labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.[7]

In purchasing a coat, one of Marx's favourite examples, the labour-value of the consumer becomes compared to that of the producer, placing them in a social relationship which demonstrates how society values their labour, often differently and thus hierarchically. But in commodity form, a product's value seems to be a result of its relationship with other products, including money. Through commodity exchange the social relationship between producer and consumer is 'mysteriously' transfigured into an apparent relationship between things. Marx calls this the 'fetishism of commodities', by which products become 'endowed with life'.[8] The obscuring of an object's production – Adorno's particular focus – is an effect of fetishization and helps sustain the illusion of an object's life-like subjectivity, but the veiling of production is not the cause or focus of commodity fetishism proper. Rather, Marx's emphasis is on the almost theological transubstantiation of the relationship between people's labour into an ostensible charade of things.

The nineteenth century was the first in which music was primarily viewed as a series of discrete compositions with object-like boundaries. In Lydia Goehr's foundational *Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* she demonstrates how music was reconceived around 1800 as a finished product rather than an act of performance.[9] While there are good reasons, such as those made by Christopher Small, to ontologically re-understand music as a performative and social act, rather than a thing-like object, the fact remains that, during the nineteenth century, music – especially the museum of 'classical' concert music – was treated as individualized works produced by a composer.[10] One effect of what Goehr calls the 'work-concept' of music was to deemphasize performers, leading to the veiling of musical labour that Adorno observes in Wagner. The modern formulation of music as a work also made it easier to be owned and exchanged as a commodity, sold as sheet music and public concerts. While Goehr focuses on the aesthetic, museum-izing impact of the work-concept, her analysis also lends itself to an economic history of music's commercialization around 1800, which was no doubt an impetus behind the work-concept. Moreover, it is precisely the work-concept's sublimation of the performative and social qualities of music that make supposedly object-like compositions so rich for interpretation.

The relationships between audience, composer and performers are embedded within – not merely represented by – the formal structure of compositions. It is precisely in the relationships between objects, which Marx calls 'social hieroglyphics', where we can determine what society, often unbeknownst to itself, values and equates.[11]

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[7] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (London: Elecbook, 1998): 104.

[8] Marx, *Capital*, 105.

[9] See Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

[10] See Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998).

[11] Marx, *Capital*, 107.

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Orchestration and Social Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century

In 'Colour', the fifth chapter of *In Search of Wagner*, Adorno addresses how Wagner's orchestration gives his music the unproduced sheen of a commodity. Starting with *Lohengrin*, Wagner made colour a constitutive part of his compositional process, making the 'art of orchestration' 'structurally significant'.[12] But, as Adorno points out, this was not an emancipation so much as a redeployment, in which new colours served dramatic ends and the timbre of different instruments was strategically merged so that 'the specific sound of each instrument is lost; they can no longer be separated out, and the final sound gives no clue as to how it was created'.[13] Adorno gives the example of the 'unison combination of flute and clarinet' in *Lohengrin*, later adding that 'doubling in unison is the *Ur*-phenomenon of Wagner's blended timbres'.[14] However, what distinguishes Wagner's orchestration is not mere doubling, but doing so across selective sectional registers and instrument groups. In the example of the doubled flutes and clarinets in *Lohengrin*, Wagner 'skips' over the in-between registers of the oboes and English horn, which are not silent, but provide padding voices with subtle intermediary timbres to smooth out the sound. Half a century later, Strauss himself described *Lohengrin* as 'a basic textbook for the advanced student' of the 'art of orchestration', singling out the treatment of the wind instruments for their 'cementing' function.[15] By adding English horn and bass clarinet to the orchestra, Wagner's expanded woodwind section had a more differentiated and flexible sound palette, and thus served as the binding agents of his tone colour. Wagner's frequent doublings within the woodwinds not only obscured the sound of each instrument, but supplied various configurations for best blending their timbre with either brass or strings. Indeed, Wagner's doubling of select woodwinds with brass harmonies is his signature sound, differentiating it from that of both earlier and later composers.

All of the major qualities of Wagnerian orchestration are on display in *Lohengrin*'s Prelude. Outside the violins, scarcely is there a naked instrument whose line is not doubled, either in unison or harmony. When the entire woodwind section first enters (bars 20–27), the oboes, clarinets and first two flutes play in unison, while the third flute does the same with the English horn, bass clarinet and bass. The sound is rich, unified and without clear performative origin. Similarly, at the climax of the Prelude (bars 54–57), the strings go silent and we hear that unprecedented, distinctly Wagnerian merger of woodwinds and brass, the flutes and English horn playing in unison with horns, trumpets and occasionally bassoons. Crucial to Wagner's blended yet distinctive orchestration is the practice of not having the entire orchestra play in unison, as was more common in earlier orchestral music, choosing instead calculated omission of instruments or – more commonly – chord padding with instruments in register gaps to fill out and merge the timbre. In bars 20–27, this 'cementing', as Strauss called it, is accomplished by the third flute, English horn and bass clarinet, notably all instruments Wagner added for *Lohengrin*. Through these technical innovations the 'specific character' of instruments, as Adorno observed, 'vanish in an enchanted sound

[12] Adorno, *Wagner*, 60–61.

[13] Adorno, *Wagner*, 63.

[14] Adorno, *Wagner*, 63, 68.

[15] Adorno, *Wagner*, 62; Hector Berlioz and Richard Strauss, *Treatise on Instrumentation*, trans. Theodore Front (New York: Dover, 1991): ii.

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that appears unrelated to any instrumental grouping'.[16] There are certainly passages in Wagner where one can discern individual instruments and instrument groups, but they are increasingly rare after *Lohengrin* and not the focus of this analysis of the veiling of labour in Wagner's orchestration. In Wagner's orchestration, blended timbre is a gravitational pull, not an absolute, a statement that can be inverted in the cases of Strauss and Mahler.

Wagner's tendency to conceal performers, and thus labour, achieved architectural reinforcement with his creation of the sunken orchestral pit at Bayreuth, but it is present in the very structure of his music. For Adorno, Wagner's blended orchestration is what made his music most akin to a commodity: 'Wagner's oeuvre comes close to the consumer goods of the nineteenth century which knew no greater ambition than to conceal every sign of the work that went into them'.[17] Adorno's insights into Wagner's orchestration ultimately come from Berlioz's *Treatise on Instrumentation*, which Strauss reissued in 1905 with added commentary, mostly on Wagner. In the specific context of the end of Act II of *Lohengrin*, Strauss claims that 'Wagner succeeds in drawing organ sounds from the orchestra', a point extended by Adorno to Wagner's more global ability to make music that 'resembles the thing-like sound of the organ'.[18] But the organ does not merely create a depersonalized sound; it is a singular instrument, which the orchestra becomes through Wagnerian orchestration. Despite larger ensembles with more varied instruments, and partially because of this ballooning of orchestral means, the sound of individual instruments receded in late-nineteenth-century music. As the self-deluding doctrine of music's autonomy from commerce became more entrenched, so art music became a more perfect commodity by concealing the performative labour that went into its production.

In examining commodity fetishism in Wagner, Adorno's appropriation of Marx's concept is remarkably loose and limited. Adorno remains hung up on labour's concealment and never really explores how the social relationships of music making are transposed into an apparent life of things like musical works, aesthetic content and concert tickets. Adorno's chapter 'Phantasmagoria', and the analysis therein of Wagner's 'occultation of production', explicitly invoke Marx's discussion of commodity fetishism. But in assessing how Wagner 'purveys illusions' and how his 'operas tend to become commodities', Adorno continues to focus on Wagner as a mere concealer of production, as well as his tendency to peddle fantasies as real, akin to literal magic lantern shows.[19] But the illusion that commodities have their own personhood is only one half of the fetishism process, the other being the reification of social relationships. What Adorno calls 'the transformation of the unruly body of instruments into the docile palette of the composer' applies more literally to orchestra members, who are transformed into an extension of the composer's will when performing Wagner.[20] And one could make the same argument about Liszt, not only though his Wagnerian blending of instruments, but through the addition of extra-musical programmes and the Idealist philosophy that undergird New German aesthetics of how to listen to programme music. Similarly, Hanslick and the opponents of programme music

[16] Adorno, *Wagner*, 65.
[17] Adorno, *Wagner*, 72.
[18] Berlioz and Strauss, ii; Adorno, *Wagner*, 63.
[19] Adorno, *Wagner*, 79.
[20] Adorno, *Wagner*, 70.

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insisted on compositional and listening ideals that imagined performers as conduits for music's structural content, a product wholly from the composer.

For all their differences, both sides of the War of the Romantics agreed that 'content' – rather than the superficialities of form – gave serious music its value. At mid-century, the vast majority of music writers considered melodies the focus of listening, with thematic originality, development, cohesion and complexity the mark of high-end musical content. By contrast, the emerging New German School of the 1850s celebrated the extra-musical ideas indicated by written programmes as a composition's 'poetic content', something they deemed more expressive and precise than 'absolute' instrumental music.[21] But, in either case, a composition's quality was determined by its 'content', that transcendent characteristic of serious music, which differentiated it from entertainment music and towards which theorists encouraged audiences to focus their attention. Music could be entertaining and delighting to the senses, but that was merely, as esteemed Berlin critic Gustav Engel put it in 1855, 'the process by which musical content was disseminated'.[22] Moreover, it was through content that the listener accessed the mind of the composer, either directly or through the mental residue deposited in their tone creations.[23] Musical performance or performers, thus, did not contribute to music's content, defined as either poetic idea or melodic structure.

Both sides in the War of the Romantics were explicit that orchestration was not itself content, only its vehicle. In *On the Musically Beautiful*, Hanslick clearly places instrumental colour in a subservient role to the other facets of composition, most notably melody, which he repeatedly privileges as the 'fundamental form of musical beauty'.[24] Moreover, Hanslick writes that the purpose of colour is to 'highlight [s] and shadow' the 'already formed idea'.[25] He is quite specific that volume, transposition, or re-scoring do not change musical structure, form, or content, three interchangeable words for Hanslick. Like performance itself, colour can only clarify or obscure content for the listener.[26] New Germans certainly gave orchestration more consideration in the compositional process, but they were no less categorical than formalists in assigning colour a subservient function.

In response to the torrent of negative reviews heaped on the first performances of Liszt's symphonic poems, Felix Draeseke, a student of and key apologist for Liszt, published a highly partisan defence of his teacher's seemingly ornate orchestration:

> By these examples we hope to have successfully justified the use of large ensembles. Clearly, they serve a higher purpose and are not merely to be used for their own sake … The greatest and most difficult task, of course, is to be able to use this large ensemble to actual effect, to work with it economically when called for, moreover, to find

[21] On the New German concept of poetic content in music, see Franz Brendel, *Franz Liszt als Symphoniker* (Leipzig: C. Merseburger, 1859): 10–15.

[22] G[ustav]. E[ngel]., 'Berliner Briefe: Das Liszt-Concert', *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 3/51 (1855): 406.

[23] Eduard Hanslick, *Eduard Hanslick's On the Musically Beautiful: A New Translation*, trans. Lee Rothfarb and Christoph Landerer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): 45.

[24] Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 40, 41.

[25] Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 21, 112.

[26] Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 112.

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> the appropriate colour, to create the desired mood; and above all to achieve the greatest possible degree of melodious sound through the beautiful, measured use of it.[27]

Contrary to the formalist critique, Liszt and company actually aimed for rigorous lawfulness in their compositions, which included a 'measured', 'economic' and 'appropriate' use of colour.[28] For the New Germans, orchestration not only served 'melodious sound', but also the overall mood and the capacity of music to illicit a distinct image of the music's programme, that is, 'to support cogently the dramatic effects'.[29] Draeseke praised Liszt's symphonic poems for not using 'any thicker colouration than was required', which he juxtaposed with Berlioz's unfortunate tendency 'to allow particular characteristics to shine forth at the expense of the total impression'.[30] Thus, for all the New German innovations in orchestration, they retreated from the emancipation of colour, which Dahlhaus noted had been 'initiated by Berlioz', in order to ensure that poetic content and the 'total impression' remained in focus.[31]

Despite differing definitions of content, as well as different measurements for assessing colour's necessity, Draeseke shared with his antipode Hanslick the belief that orchestration was a means to an ends and relegated to a supportive role. Hanslick placed the onus on composers to score music in proportion to its content, so as to bring attention to the musical structure. Formalists were certainly not adverse to colour dynamics, but argued that they should only be as elaborate as a composition's thematic development. From Hanslick's perspective, the error of the New Germans was ostentatious excess, but one could also go too far the other direction, such as Brahms's First Symphony, which Hanslick considered too austere in its tone colours, given its melodic depth and complexity.[32] He thought that Brahms corrected this in his Second Symphony, which Hanslick probably praised more than any new orchestral work in his lifetime. He specifically called the instrumental colour 'uniform', resulting in 'sunny clarity' of the musical content.[33] On the other side of the War of the Romantics, Draeseke asserted that Liszt's 'colorations are distinctive and re-create a mood in such powerful fashion that we no longer hear, but rather believe that we actually see what is happening'.[34] This remarkable statement, which echoes Adorno's view of the phantasmagoric 'illusion as the absolute reality' in Wagner, provides evidence that the conceit of programme music really redirected audience attention from the sound of performance to imaginative poetic content.[35] For all the partisanship of the 1850s, the

[27] Felix Draeseke, 'Franz Liszt's Nine Symphonic Poems', trans. Susan Hohl, in *Franz Liszt and his World*, ed. Christopher H. Gibbs and Dana Gooley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006): 504–5.

[28] On the lawfulness of New German aesthetics see Chapter One of Jonathan Gentry, 'Sound Bodies: Biopolitics in German Musical Culture, 1850–1910' (PhD diss., Brown University, 2015).

[29] Draeseke, 'Franz Liszt's Nine Symphonic Poems', 503.

[30] Draeseke, 'Franz Liszt's Nine Symphonic Poems', 504–5.

[31] Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 243.

[32] Eduard Hanslick, *Hanslick's Music Criticisms*, ed. and trans. Henry Pleasants (New York: Dover Publications, 1963): 158: 'Brahms tendency to veil or dampen anything which might have the appearance of "effect" makes itself felt in the C Minor Symphony to a questionable degree.'

[33] Hanslick, *Hanslick's Music Criticisms*, 158.

[34] Draeseke, 'Franz Liszt's Nine Symphonic Poems', 504–5.

[35] Adorno, *Wagner*, 79.

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German music world was of one accord that instrumentation should neither stand out for its own virtuosic sake, nor allow tone colour to outshine the poetic or melodic content. In other, less reifying words, orchestra performers should not stand out.

The initial reception of Liszt's symphonic poems further illustrates the obsession with content and fear of unnecessary orchestration. Following highly anticipated and widely reviewed concerts in Berlin (1855), Leipzig, Vienna and Dresden (all 1857), critics were virtually unanimous in their derision of Liszt's orchestral works, with only the small coterie of New Germans like Draeseke expressing support. In particular, reviewers found the orchestration excessive, noisy and incommensurate with the relatively sparse deployment and development of melodic themes. In Berlin, Gustav Engel compared *Les Préludes* and *Tasso* to salon compositions, 'which instead of a robust content were satisfied with external plastering and rustling tinsel', arguing that 'from a musical point of view, one must protest against their instrumentation and tone content [*Ton-Inhalt*], particularly the wild, rushing moments'.[36] A writer for the *Rheinische Musik-Zeitung* observed that 'themes do not develop, but only repeat, albeit in a different way, performed by different instruments, adorned with new decorations'.[37] Following the Leipzig premiere of *Les Préludes* and *Mazeppa*, the *Deutsche allgemeine Zeitung* described them saying 'a deluge of orchestral noise rushes over the poor unformed melodies and buries them in black trash', adding that 'orchestral garb confer a semblance of something extraordinary'.[38] Such commentary occurs so frequently in late-nineteenth-century criticism of large orchestral works that it is easy to lose sight of its profound significance for musical performance. The surface/depth metaphors – such as clothing/body – used to describe the relationship between orchestration and content betray deeply ingrained aesthetic hierarchies between composition and performance, artistic genius and technical proficiency.[39]

The reactions to Liszt's symphonic poems show how mid-century veiling of musical production was accomplished not only through Wagnerian coloration and extra-musical programmes, but also through content-centric listening habits. This is particularly evident in the accusations of repetitiveness by formalists. Carl Banck characterized Liszt's symphonic poems as consisting 'really only of juxtaposed repeats of themes in the most different keys and with new instrumental sound effects'.[40] The performance of a similar melody by a different instrument was heard as sameness and an act of repetition by Liszt, despite the auditory fact that the music changed and despite the temporal fact that individual instrumentalists were not repeating themselves. By making melody the primary content of music, as well as the terrain where a composer leaves their distinct mark of authorship, the very facticity of performative acts recedes out of view or earshot. Like the composer's work of orchestration, musical performers cannot add musical

[36] E[ngel]., 'Berliner Briefe', 405–6.

[37] 'Fünftes Concert des Stern'schen Orchester-Vereins in Berlin', *Rheinische Musik-Zeitung* 6/50 (1855): 398.

[38] Quoted in Keith T. Johns, 'Liszt at the Gewandhaus: A Study of Documents for the 26 February 1857 Concert', *Journal of the American Liszt Society* 27 (1990): 41, 44.

[39] For a history of these metaphors, see Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E.T.A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[40] Quoted in Keith T. Johns, *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt*, ed. Michael Saffle (New York: Pendragon Press, 1997): 111.

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value, only subtract through performances unfaithful to the composer's value-creating vision, a further relational inequity. However, as a result of the work-concept and commodity fetishism, these social relations between people were displaced into and reified as purely objective, aesthetic relationships between content (read composer) and orchestration (read orchestra).

Such veiling of musical production not only served to increase the importance – and labour value – of the composer, but to make the serious music concert an exchange more directly between audience and composer. Both sides of the War of the Romantics sought to cut out the orchestra as 'middle man' by celebrating concert music as an encounter with the genius, intellect and imagination of the composer, whose melodic or poetic content, not the act of performance, served as meeting point. In *On the Musically Beautiful*, Hanslick writes that 'tone combinations are achieved through the free creativity of the imagination, the intellectual power and individuality of that particular imagination imprint themselves on the product as *character*'.[41] For New Germans, tone-poetic content provided even more intimate access to the mind of the composer, such as when Franz Brendel described Liszt's symphonic poems upon first hearing them performed: 'We feel touched by the breath of genius.'[42] Indeed, in 'Berlioz and His Harold Symphony', where Liszt coined the term 'programme music', he justified programmes as necessary to sharpen the communication between composer and listener, particularly to share 'a series of emotional states which are unequivocally and definitely latent in his [the composer's] consciousness', and to indicate 'the direction of his ideas, the point of view from which he grasps a given subject'.[43] Liszt, who put so much effort into his orchestration and directing the performances of his orchestra members in Weimar, did so to reproduce 'a picture clearly present in his mind'.[44] Liszt did not want to leave the poetic content of his symphonic poems in doubt or up to audience interpretation, but viewed the orchestra, especially *his* orchestra at the Weimar court, as an apparatus for both accentuating his own expressive capacity and ensuring the audience's ability to grasp his meaning.

If content is what gave music its artistic significance, the absence of content at a serious music concert constituted both an aesthetic and transactional shortcoming. This is precisely why the first reviewers of Liszt's symphonic poems were so disappointed and likened the compositions to popular music.[45] The stimulating effects of performed music could be acquired at any ball, but content was the scare resource that made serious, instrumental music an intellectual, luxury good. Hanslick even argued in his notorious chapter on 'pathological listening' that consuming music for its sensual effects devalued serious music: 'A fine cigar, a spicy delicacy, a warm bath achieves for them [superficial listeners], unconsciously, the same thing as a symphony'.[46] By focusing on sound effects and the merely 'elemental' in music, a listener essentially overpays for titillation that could be more easily acquired elsewhere. Similarly, music that supplies more

41 Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 45.
42 Franz Brendel, 'Franz Liszt in Leipzig', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 46/10 (1857): 102.
43 Franz Liszt, 'Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 43/5 (1855): 52.
44 Liszt, 'Berlioz und seine Haroldsymphonie'.
45 E[ngel]., 'Berliner Briefe', 406; O. Lindner, 'Das Lisztconcert', *Vossische Zeitung* (8 Dec. 1855): 4.
46 Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 83.

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ornamental coloration than content fails to deliver the rarefied experience desired by educated listeners. This is why the reaction to Liszt's symphonic poems was so uniform in claiming that 'the melody is poor',[47] and that the works suffer 'from a complete poverty of actual musical ideas',[48] or, as yet another writer put it, an 'inner poverty of musical thoughts'.[49] While such 'poverty' [*Armut*] was no doubt a metaphor for aesthetic value, it hints at the economic and social ramifications of this entire discourse about musical content: the presumption that the elite, paying audiences of the Philharmonic were buying intellectualized content produced by an artist, not sounds created by performers. According to Hanslick, only those from a lower station in European society, or those who were less evolved in a Social Darwinist sense, listened to music for its ephemeral 'effects'.[50] In the case of Liszt's symphonic poems, their impoverished themes seemed to cheat disappointed art-music enthusiasts out of their time and money by offering up the kind of superficial fare craved by inferiors and widely available outside the symphony.

A further significance of obscuring musical production was that it allowed the listener to exchange their own labour for that of the composer rather than that of poorly paid performers. The German bourgeoisie was thus able to equate its own commercial activities with artistic creation and avoid any 'social questions' raised by comparing the social status of those on the stage with those in the seats. The desire to primarily engage and even identify with the composer rather than the musical servers, a social divergence quite palpable in the age of Wagner and Hanslick, resulted in the fetishization of 'sonically moving forms'. The 'musical work' came alive, while the social realities of music life reified into aesthetic discussions about form and the proper venues for listening to different kinds of music. Indeed, the penchant for organicism in A.B. Marx – and German writers who followed thereafter – not only encouraged structural unity in compositions, but vitalized musical discourse in a way Karl Marx would characterize as fetishist. The frequency with which Hanslick speaks of musical forms as lifelike, using the language of biology and subjectivity, should key us in to the deep commodity fetishism of the time.[51] He writes about the physiology of Verdi's Requiem, the physiognomy of Wagner's leitmotifs and the 'Mozartian blood' that flows in the veins of Brahms's Second Symphony.[52] This living personhood of thing-like musical compositions seems all the more fetishist when juxtaposed with how infrequently critics acknowledged that of musicians. Organicism gave concert music artistry, while taking it from performers. And by engaging music as aesthetic form, rather than social practice, the consumer ultimately disavowed comparison of their labour or social status with that of orchestra members. In sum, the nineteenth-century veiling of musical production created a mutually beneficial pact between bourgeois audience and composer that became understood, through the fetishization process, as an aesthetic (rather than social) dictum about the subservient role of orchestral colour.

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47 Quoted in Johns, *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt*, 111.

48 'Das dritte Concert der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien', *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 15/13 (1857): 155.

49 'Aus Leipzig', *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung* 5/11 (1857): 85.

50 Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 83–89.

51 See chapter 1 of Gentry, 'Sound Bodies'.

52 Hanslick, *Music Criticisms*, 166, 199, 157.

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Unblended Timbre and *Fin-de-Siècle* (Musical) Production

Strauss's *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony are both generically ambiguous, combining features of programme and absolute music, while flouting the dogmatic aesthetics of formalists and New Germans alike. This is most obvious with Mahler, who appears to have only added section and movement titles after the 1889 Budapest premiere, though these titles, including calling the entire thing *Titan*, were subsequently retracted after the 1894 Weimar performance, where listeners could not make sense of how the collage of extra-musical references related to or was expressed by the music.[53] The excised, temporary subtitle, 'A Tone Poem in Symphonic Form', concisely explains how Mahler's First Symphony was a provocative and ultimately confusing merger of genres from either side of the War of the Romantics. At no point, however, did Mahler give the composition a programme or give his music the mandate to express a prose narrative in the manner of Liszt's symphonic poems. Rather, Mahler's vague and suggestive references – Dante, Hoffmann, Jean Paul, natural settings – encouraged dialogue between music and the extra-musical. Unlike the practice of Liszt and the early New German School, Mahler never made poetic content the compositional vanishing point, and as a result, he refocused audience attention on orchestral concert music as an act of collective, even chaotic performance.

The case for *Don Juan*'s generic ambiguity is less cut and dried, but similarly indicated in the subtitle: 'Tone Poem for Large Orchestra (After Lenau).' Strauss's 'tone poem' – not symphonic poem – is inspired by and in dialogue with Nikolaus Lenau's poem of the same name. But, like Mahler's First Symphony, Strauss's *Don Juan* is not a sonic realization or direct translation of a literary text, in large part because Strauss never supplied a clear, detailed narrative for his audience to follow. The closest thing *Don Juan* has to an official programme is the brief 1896 analysis by Friedrich Rösch, a friend of Strauss and the dedicatee of *Tod und Verklärung*. Rösch outlines the main themes and divides the work into four episodes – an introduction where Don Juan 'storms' through life, two (not three) seductions and the final 'carnival scene' – but does so without any reference or correspondence to Lenau's poem.[54] To be sure, Strauss privately had a programmatic narrative in mind about the escapades of Don Juan, but he was almost as coy about sharing it as Mahler was about the meaning of his music. Rather, Strauss selected 32 out of the 1108 lines in Lenau's poem for work's official programme, using the lines to hint at some of the appropriate extra-musical moods, but in no way spelling out a plot or the full procession of those moods, especially in the second half. Audiences understood the music as a developmental interaction between 'male' and 'female' themes, but the story of Strauss's *Don Juan* had to be created by listeners based on their individualized knowledge of Lenau or the Don Juan legends.[55] Just as poems possess more representational plasticity than prose, so also do

[53] On the various versions and revisions of Mahler's First Symphony, see Stephen McClatchie, 'The 1889 Version of Mahler's First Symphony: A New Manuscript Source', *19th-Century Music* 20/2 (1996): 99–124; Otto Lessmann explicitly stated that it was 'impossible to find a poetic connection between poem and music'. See Otto Lessmann, 'Von der Tonkünstlerversammlung in Weimar', *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 21/15 (1894): 349.

[54] Friedrich Rösch, 'Don Juan: Tondichtung (Nach Nikolaus Lenau's Dramatischem Gedicht) Für Grosses Orchester Komponiert von Richard Strauss, Op. 20', *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 23/22–23 (1896): 301–5.

[55] For example, see 'Weimar', *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 20/48 (1889): 577.

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Strauss's tone poems have less prescribed meaning than Liszt's symphonic poems or the kind of programme music Strauss derided as mere 'Literaturmusik', in which 'the music does not develop logically out of itself'.[56] Strauss's *Don Juan* is certainly more reliant on poetic content than Mahler's First Symphony, but the former still minimizes the purchase of the extra-musical on music, forcing the audience, as James Hepokoski has argued, to forge their own connection between music and text.[57]

Strauss and Mahler did not only spare large, colourful orchestral music from fully serving poetic duties, but they also liberated individual instruments from the undifferentiated sonic mass of Wagner. *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony almost never double brass with woodwinds or even blend timbres across instrument groups, those foundational practices of Wagner's unified sound without clear performer origins. Rather, orchestral combinations serve to highlight differences in timbre, rendering more audible individual themes within contrapuntal passages. Polyphony in Strauss and Mahler is buttressed by what might be called polyphonic timbre. Even when Strauss and Mahler double across woodwinds and strings, it is often as accompaniment that contrasts sharply with the timbre of the main theme or is done in high registers that give the doubled melody further distinction from the rest of the music. Such resistance to blending orchestral colour is evident in the opening statements of both compositions, especially the loudest, most triumphal passages, where one anticipates, but does not encounter, a colour convergence typical of post-Wagnerian practice.

The first 13 bars of *Don Juan* are explosive, but still bound by an organicist unity of melody and tone palette, an opening sonic stability, but one quickly undone. Indeed, *Don Juan*'s moments of melodic and timbral resolution are always on the verge of being upended by fanfares and themes related to the titular character. With the start of section A, especially bars 23–26, the entire orchestra returns to the double forte of the opening, but no longer playing in unison. With strings and winds alternating instead of doubling their arpeggios – and the glockenspiel first entering to play similarly off the trumpets – the orchestral sound is massive, but not a unitary mass. The contrapuntal themes from each instrument group can each be heard, in part because of the contrast in registers and thus timbre. Throughout the rest of the composition, the loudest, fastest, busiest passages are similarly marked by polyphonic timbre. To be sure, Strauss could orchestrate in a blended, Wagnerian manner on a 'maximalist' scale, as Taruskin has described

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[56] Quoted in James Hepokoski, 'Fiery-Pulsed Libertine or Domestic Hero? Strauss's Don Juan Reinvestigated', in *Richard Strauss: New Perspectives on the Composer and his Work*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992): 140.

[57] In Hepokoski's influential reading of *Don Juan*, he likewise emphasizes its formal ambiguity, both in musical structure and as programme music. However, he projects *Don Juan*'s programmatic ambiguity onto the symphonic poem as a genre, arguing that the 'genre exists, *qua* genre, solely within the receiver, who agrees to create it' by 'play[ing] the game' of connecting music and programme. While this understanding of programme music as dependent on the listener's active and subjective participation is applicable to *Don Juan*, it was certainly not the intent of Liszt in his symphonic poems. Additionally, Strauss with *Don Juan* (as well as Mahler with his First Symphony) stopped calling their works symphonic poems, further evidence of their departure from the typical New German approach to programme music. See Hepokoski, 'Fiery-Pulsed Libertine or Domestic Hero?' 136–7.

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turn-of-the-century music.[58] This can be heard in the *tranquillo* passage in bars 90–100, especially when the oboes double the cellos and violins. Strauss's euphonious blending of colour, here often associated with Don Juan's initial process of seduction, is aided by the limited use of brass, but also serves as a backdrop for the lone horn, which protests this temporary blending of timbre and hints at its impending dissolution.

With Mahler's First Symphony, the pedal point offers a quieter, but no less homogenous opening soundscape, functioning as the univocity against which fanfares, 'cuckoos' and instruments announce their arrival and difference. Adorno refers to this as the 'rupture', 'breakthrough' and 'rending of the veil'.[59] As with *Don Juan*, the first time that the entire orchestra (including timpani) plays double forte – starting in bar 135 – the melodies and timbre of the woodwinds, brass and strings retain their sectional individuality. The instruments having assembled, the rest of the movement possesses a mosaic quality as Mahler resists doublings across instrumental groups until bars 385–389, when the woodwinds and strings play the main melody in unison. However, this Classical timbre is almost immediately interrupted in bar 390 by grotesque horn trills. Even more than the follow up works *Tod und Verklärung* and Mahler's Second Symphony, *Don Juan* and the First Symphony refuse sustained resolutions.

In the fourth and final movement of his First Symphony, Mahler demonstrates a New German ability to blend timbre more thoroughly, often, though, a fragile or incomplete achievement. In bars 55–66, the sudden arrival of doublings – within and across instrument groups – creates resolve for the rushing first violins, directed by the score to play 'energetic'. Bars 55–56 even evoke the organ-like sound of Wagner, but this euphony is interrupted by muted trumpets in bar 67. Such blended doubling is heard again in the false finale, pointing to how Mahler frequently blends tone colours during moments of harmonic resolution, making them mutually reinforcing dimensions of music. Only in the actual finale, does the symphony abandon its polyphony – including unblended timbres – in favour of a New German orchestral sound, unified in both theme and colour. By using Wagnerian orchestration more sparingly than its namesake, Strauss and Mahler added extra dynamics to orchestral music. Blended timbre becomes an achievement towards which the music can strive, or else one style among others between which music can vacillate.

In a *fin-de-siècle* music world still fractured by and fighting the War of the Romantics, all aesthetic camps agreed that the ostentatious coloration of Strauss and Mahler was disproportionate to and incongruous with the 'thoughts' and 'content' of their works. Following the disastrous performance of *Don Juan* in Dresden, the first after its Weimar premiere, a formalist critic noted that 'the eminent skill of the author is in instrumentation', but further clarified the backhandedness of the compliment, saying it 'did not possess strong purpose and clear creative ability … a tantalizing, tasty shell of dyed glaze' around a 'small kernel of modest content'.[60] Just as Liszt's symphonic poems had been described as sweet and empty, *Don Juan* was heard as a tiny bit of content candied by tone colour.

[58] Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 5 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 3–5.

[59] Theodor Adorno, *Mahler: A Musical Physiognomy*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 5.

[60] 'Feuilleton', *Dresdner Journal*, 11 Jan. 1890, 1.

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Bernard Vogel, in what was probably the first in-depth analysis of Strauss in a musical periodical, wrote that 'Colouring is the Alpha and Omega of his artistic thoughts and feelings; it is his main ambition to contend with [Hans] Makart, who as a painter composed symphonies of colour, and also to devise sound combinations, which in intoxicating splendour feature exuberant colour on the outside'.[61] When *Don Juan* then came to Berlin, leading critic Heinrich Ehrlich observed that, 'It requires the most attentive, trained ears in order to rightly find oneself between the excess of instrumentation.'[62] And Oskar Eichberg reiterated these points in his own review: 'It is mosaic work and basically as drowned in colour [*zerfarben*] as Lenau's poem itself … well appreciated for its many externally dazzling details.'[63]

While such comments were to be expected from formalist critics about a tone poem, even programme music enthusiasts felt similarly. Otto Lessmann, a noted Wagnerian, added to his otherwise positive review: 'I do not want to conceal that by my own sense of orchestration some overly noisy timbre could also have been scored a little more mildly.'[64] Similarly, Theodor Helm tempered his praise for Strauss as an 'excellent music colourist', by saying he could not find in him 'the capacity for independent melodic invention'.[65] Despite listening to *Don Juan* from very different aesthetic perspectives, the composition made each reviewer take special note of the instrumentation, while wishing they didn't have to and being disappointed that they didn't receive more thoughtful 'content' from their concert experience. The 'exuberant colour' of Strauss's 'sound combinations', as Vogel put it, was not what one was supposed to hear, since nineteenth-century aesthetics demanded that colour only enhance content.

Reviewers of Mahler's First Symphony likewise observed that 'the core of his capability lies in colouring',[66] half-heartedly praising the composer as 'a master in mixing sounds'.[67] Such sound effects were regarded as empty, Strauss-like virtuosity, though additionally 'bizarre', even 'intentionally raw and ugly'.[68] Eugenio Pirani, a Berlin critic and very quotable formalist, offers a nice summation of how Mahler's First Symphony was perceived:

> The specialties of this composer, with which he often manages to baffle the audience, are unique if not always beautiful mixtures of orchestral colour, surprising sound effects, large, powerful *FF* crescendo intensifications capable of bursting the ear, barely audible tremolo in the strings, shrill, cutting dissonances, rapid fire drum and timpani effects and more of the same. However, these are basically just externals and the serious musician finds in the middle of this magnificent apparatus very little that is inventive and manages in the end little imaginative core. A genuinely successful musical thought, which would be recognized by the healthy, genteel musician, is rarely achieved throughout this chaotic tangle of tones. It scatters lots of sand in the eyes, but offers little that satisfies and delights the heart and the mind.[69]

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61 Bernhard Vogel, 'Deutsche Komponisten der Gegenwart: Richard Strauss', *Neue Musik-Zeitung* 12 (1891): 78. Helm also calls Strauss 'a musical Makart'. See Helm, 'Concerte', 1.

62 H[einrich]. E[hrlich]., 'Theater, Kunst, Wissenschaft', *Berliner Tageblatt*, 2 Feb. 1890, 1.

63 Ch., 'Kunst und Wissenschaft', *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, 1 Feb. 1890, 1.

64 Otto Lessmann, 'Don Juan', *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 17 (1890): 69.

65 Helm, 'Concerte', 1.

66 L[udwig]. B[ussler]., 'Feuilleton', *National Zeitung*, 17 Mar. 1896, 3.

67 Robert Hirschfeld, 'Feuilleton', *Wiener Abendpost*, 20 Nov. 1900, 2.

68 Josef Scheu, 'Feuilleton', *Arbeiter Zeitung*, 22 Nov. 1900, 1.

69 Eugenio Pirani, 'Berlin', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 92/36 (1896): 399.

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As with Strauss, Mahler seemed to offer, at the expense of 'genuinely successful musical thought', 'only externals', largely defined by its palpable orchestration. Robert Hirschfeld, a rare mediator between the musical camps, noted that 'No single instrument sounds like it should really sound', describing Mahler's music as 'wild surge of weird, strange, never before heard sound mixtures and infernal noises'.[70] Like many, Hirschfeld found Mahler's music satirical: 'parody is visible as well in the symphony's instrumentation, expressing itself in the disproportion of ideas to their orchestral clothing'.[71] It was precisely the 'disproportion' of colour to content that offended nineteenth-century sensibilities, leading critics to denounced Strauss and Mahler as conjuring up sound effects in compensation for their lack of substance.

On first glance, the reception of Strauss and Mahler seems quite similar to that of Liszt, especially since critics used similar metaphors for overly orchestrated music. However, the criticism of Strauss and Mahler was not merely that their orchestration was excessive, superficial ornament. Rather, critics took their timbre to task for its unusual, clashing and unfixed qualities. A reviewer for the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* criticized *Don Juan*'s 'externally clever, roaming instrumentation', saying that 'it lacks actual escalation and unity of character', a claim even more pronounced in reviews of Mahler.[72] Hirschfeld described the finale of Mahler's First Symphony as 'a continuous play of colours instead of a play of constructive forces', underlining the critic's orthodox position that instrumentation was not itself musical construction.[73] Lessmann concurred that 'the instrumentation, which in part is handled with great virtuosity, often wanders off enough in flat shenanigans with sound effects, sometimes even degenerating into pure bluster and nerve-rattling noise'.[74] When Berliners first heard a Mahler symphony, it was his Second Symphony, which reviewers similarly characterized as 'noisy orchestral music moving in a chaos of, not dissonance, but discord', exclaiming 'what brutal extremes in instrumentation must the ear further put up with!'.[75] The orchestration of Strauss and especially Mahler clearly drew attention and dislike, not just for its size, but for the tone colours' contrasts, noisiness and transformations. By saying that Mahler's First Symphony 'sounds as if the individual instruments were wandering helplessly', an early reviewer underscores how polyphonic timbre reinforced polyphonic music, making it possible to hear 'individual instruments', even if that was not what listeners wanted out of their orchestral concert experience.[76]

The emphasis on instrumental colour was quite conscious on the part of Strauss and Mahler, who frequently addressed it in their letters, daily conversations, conducting styles and score markings. In her *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, Natalie Bauer-Lechner paints the picture of a man who regularly discussed the orchestration of the works he was conducting and composing, especially his First Symphony. In fact, it was in the context of that work when he is reported to have said:

[70] R[obert]. H[irschfeld]., 'Konzerte', *Neue Musik-Zeitung* 22/1 (1900): 9.
[71] Hirschfeld, 'Feuilleton', 2.
[72] Ch., 'Kunst und Wissenschaft', 1.
[73] Hirschfeld, 'Feuilleton', 2.
[74] Otto Lessmann, 'Aus dem Konzertsaal', *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 23/12 (1896): 167.
[75] Erich Reinhardt, 'Aus dem Konzertsaal', *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 22/10 (1895): 139–40; N. 'Theater und Musik', *Vossische Zeitung* (14 Dec. 1895): 5.
[76] 'Von der Tonkünstlerversammlung in Weimar', *Vossische Zeitung*, 7 June 1894, 5.

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> If I want to produce a soft, subdued sound, I don't give it to an instrument which produces it easily, but rather to one which can get it only with effort and under pressure – often by forcing itself and exceeding its natural range. I often make the basses and bassoon squeak on the highest notes, while my flute huffs and puffs down below. There's a passage this like in the fourth movement – you remember the entry of the violas? … I always enjoy this effect; I could never have produced that powerful, forced tone if I had given the passage to the cellos (the most obvious choice here).[77]

Hirschfeld was actually an astute observer of Mahler's stated practice for producing unique timbres, writing in his review of the symphony that 'every instrument is made to endure what it can least accomplish'.[78] Mahler took so much care with the tone colour of his First Symphony that he claims to have rescored the entire thing after its disappointing Budapest premiere.[79] According to Mahler, each new theme required 'a startling new coloration–so that it calls attention to itself',[80] and 'to bring out clearly what one has to say'.[81] This functioned as a combination of Wagner's and Hanslick's aesthetics. It gave new themes unique, vibrant colour as in Wagner, but in order to clarify the melody as Hanslick demanded, not submerge it in endless melody. However, the 'startling', often unblended nature of Mahler's orchestration made it stand out to audiences in a manner that departed from both Wagner and Hanslick.

Strauss was no less concerned with orchestration, especially that of *Don Juan*, as can be seen in letters to his father. Following the very first rehearsal, he wrote: 'It comes off beautifully and to my great satisfaction I can see that I have made further progress in orchestration. Everything sounds magnificent, though it is awfully difficult'.[82] As with Mahler, infrequent performances made it difficult for Strauss to assess his own early works, especially their colour, which was clearly not an afterthought, but a major compositional focus of *Don Juan*. Strauss's father, a notable hornist and formalist, responded to his son's repeated reference to the orchestration of *Don Juan* with the advice:

> Hopefully you will have been convinced by the performance of your work that you will have to be a little more economical and careful with the treatment of the brass in the future, and that you will not be too concerned with the outer shine and more with inner content need. Colour always remains only a means to an end.[83]

Franz Strauss's final sentence sums up nineteenth-century dictums about tone colour, which Mahler and the younger Strauss were quite consciously bucking against.

The two composers use similar techniques to make their tone colour stand out, though, as with almost everything, Mahler is the more radical. Strauss and Mahler litter their scores with hundreds of performance indicators, far more than even Liszt and Wagner. Mahler tells the players where and when to stand as well as

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77 Natalie Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, trans Dika Newlin, ed. Peter Franklin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 160.

78 R[obert]. H[irschfeld]., 'Konzerte', *Neue Musik-Zeitung* 22/1 (1900): 9.

79 McClatchie, 'The 1889 Version of Mahler's First Symphony', 106.

80 Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 159

81 Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 178.

82 Richard Strauss, *Briefe an die Eltern*, ed. Willi Schuh (Zürich: Atlantis, 1954): 121.

83 Strauss, *Briefe an die Eltern*.

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how to hold or bow their instruments. And whereas Strauss's directions use precise, musical language, Mahler branches off into un-technical specificities, particularly with regard to timbre and how the note should sound. Well-known passages are indicated with 'like a sound from nature', 'imitating a cuckoo call', 'very plain and simple in a folk manner' and 'with great wildness', but themes are also instructed to be played 'tender', 'fresh', 'animated', 'bright', 'lively', 'surging', 'ceremonial', 'with parody', 'clearly' and 'triumphal'. In order to achieve their colourful instrumentation, significant portions of *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony call for muted brass, pizzicato strings and unusually prominent deployment of drums, glockenspiel and triangle. Both composers make virtuosic demands of performers to reach little-attempted registers. Regarding rehearsals of *Don Juan*, Strauss reported to his father: 'Our first trumpet player had never seen anything like it, an old, clumsy man who had never been expected such mobility up to the high B.'[84]

By making such demands, Strauss and Mahler enhanced the noticeability of orchestra performers, even creating awareness of the arduous work of performance. The only major reviewer of *Don Juan*'s premiere called it 'quite an earful, as the work puts very unusual requirements, not only on the orchestra, but also on the comprehension of the listener … The enormous difficulties of the performance were overcome by the successful orchestra'.[85] And following the German premiere of Mahler's First Symphony, Ernst Otto Nodnagel felt compelled to note that 'Mahler expected unheard of stresses of an orchestra in a time when they were already more than overburdened, spoiling a wonderful festival by giving a whole number of people headaches'.[86] Negative reviewers of Strauss and Mahler often felt empathy for and kinship with performers, as if both had been brutalized by the composer. Through emancipated, often unblended tone colour, Strauss and Mahler turned orchestra performers into co-producers of their difficult music. Within the context of nineteenth-century expectations, colourful orchestration made it difficult to listen to *Don Juan* or Mahler's First Symphony as a pure expression of either composer's intellect. The frequent, critical trope of 'sound effects' [*Klangwirkungen*] not only implies that the music is not 'music', but that the compositions were a composite of technical, performative acts (plural), not a singular, intellectual work of artistry. Indeed, the very notion of '*Wirkung*' highlights how the music of Strauss and Mahler was not perceived as existing primarily as a score (produced by a composer), but as a temporally bound, unfolding act of performance (produced by players).

By heightening the role of performance and performers in orchestral music, Strauss and Mahler short-circuited the more direct exchange between composer and audience typical of the nineteenth century. Early reviewers, still moored to either formalist or New German listening habits, found their encounter with such colourful music a disquieting barrier to accessing the composers and any content they had to disseminate. Hirschfeld wrote that Strauss 'speaks in a foreign language … Straussian is nowhere to be found'.[87] Helm, who could not discover in *Don Juan* 'the capacity for independent melodic invention, for a really unique

[84] Strauss, *Briefe an die Eltern*, 119.
[85] 'Weimar', *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, 577.
[86] Ernst Otto Nodnagel, 'Von der Tonkünstler-Versammlung in Weimar', *Berliner Tageblatt*, 7 June 1894, 4.
[87] R[obert]. H[irschfeld]., 'Wien', *Neue Musik Zeitung* 13/3 (1892): 31.

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tonal language', also called Mahler's First Symphony a 'treasure trove of Beethoven, Wagner, Bruckner, Mendelssohn, Weber and so on'.[88] Melodic originality was not only valued as evidence of genius, but for imbuing music and the listening experience with the subjectivity of the composer. At the turn of the century, music writers remained confused by who the 'real' Strauss or 'real' Mahler was, since their performance-heavy and performance-reliance styles produced such heterogeneous music. Strauss defender Paul Riesenfeld ultimately explained the inconsistency by saying that 'Two souls shine in Richard Strauss's chest', one humorous and satirical, the other dramatic and lyrical.[89]

The emancipation of colour, exemplified and popularized by *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony mediated a changing relationship between composer and performer, shifting the dynamic from that of distanced master and servant to something more intimate approximating management and labour. In their roles as conductors – the 'managers' of concert music production – both Strauss and Mahler pushed orchestra members to work harder, produce more and produce better, while also expressing sympathy for their plight as workers. As a perfectionist, Mahler was especially hard on his performers, who he demeaned as mere artisans.[90] Regarding the work he demanded of his orchestras, Mahler reflected, '[l]ooking back, I've often felt sorry for the poor fellows who were my first victims, and whose last breath and last energies I mercilessly extorted in my rehearsals'.[91] Strauss was similarly apologetic about the demands of his works, but that did not stop either from pushing performers to their breaking point. After rehearsals for *Don Juan*, Strauss reported that 'a horn player sat drowsy, breathless and sighed: "Dear God! What did we do to you that you sent us this whipping (that's me)! We won't be able to get rid of him anytime soon". We laughed tears! The horn players blew in defiance of death!'[92] As evinced by the laughing, Strauss the manager had a more congenial relationship with his orchestras than Mahler, who constantly incited his overtaxed (and inadequate) performers to revolt.

Strauss and Mahler wrote *Kapellmeistermusik*, a term typically used to dismiss a composer as eclectic and unoriginal.[93] While the originality and value of their aesthetic contributions should now be beyond question, there is much truth in the face value of this phrase. As musicians who conducted more than almost any canonical composers before them, that extensive experience managing orchestra members is present in how they wrote their works, particularly their orchestration. In fact, unlike most of Mahler's later works, composed in the respite of summer, his First Symphony was almost entirely written during a time when he was 'constantly conducting and rehearsing'.[94] And Mahler's demanding, often tyrannical

[88] Helm, 'Concerte', 1; [Helm]h-m, 'Theater, Kunst und Literatur', 12–13.

[89] Paul Riesenfeld, 'Feuersnot', *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 28/50–51 (1901): 838. Bruno Walter said something similar about Mahler and suggested that the beautiful, dramatic (i.e. Wagnerian) Mahler was the real Mahler, not the composer of grotesque, banal passages. Bruno Walter, 'Gustav Mahlers III. Symphonie', *Der Merker* 1 (1909): 9–11.

[90] Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav* Mahler, 45.

[91] Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 36.

[92] Strauss, *Briefe an die Eltern*, 120.

[93] The term 'Kapellmeistermusik' became popular in the 1920s and was frequently used in reference to Strauss and especially Mahler. For example, see Max Chop, 'Die bewusste Abkehr von der Moderne', *Signale für die musikalische Welt* 87/17 (1929): 545.

[94] Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav* Mahler, 158.

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relationship with his performers transferred into his method of orchestrating his own symphony. At every one of his many conducting posts, performers bucked against and buckled under his time-consuming and perfectionist production requests. From having to rehearse more than eight hours a day in Kassel, Mahler reports that 'a real revolution threated to break out in my orchestra'.[95] The quantity of time Mahler demanded was a result of his desire to improve the output of his performers, even those of the elite Hofoper in Vienna, who led him to say 'I want so much more out of them, and at close range I find masses of offending features and imperfections'.[96] As a manager, Mahler spent considerable time with musical labour, scrupulously checking the quality of their work.

Even after Mahler started conducting and directing operas in Vienna in 1897, he remained a taskmaster, but one who gradually learned new, twentieth-century methods for motivating his performers to maximize production. After an incident during a performance of *Die Walküre*, when a timpanist passed his part to another performer in order to catch the last train home to Brünn, Mahler lobbied management for his performers to be paid more so that they could afford to live in Vienna.[97] Mahler began advocating for labour, and even for better 'working conditions',[98] not necessarily to improve the overall livelihood of his performers, but to increase their production capacity and improve the quality of his musical product. This became something of a trend as he began to feed or give bonuses to stagehands if they did not go home to eat. The *Hofoper* management put a stop to this arrangement, leaving Mahler (whose salary was twenty times higher than some of his orchestra members) to temporarily pay the bonuses out of his own pocket in order to keep his promises.[99] Such strategies spoke to a new turn-of-the-century attitude toward labour, which was less concerned with segregated concealment and rather sought to maximize production through incentivizing, integrating and managing workers more 'scientifically'.

Through their innovations in orchestration, Strauss and Mahler challenged the commodity qualities of orchestral music, though not the spell of commodity fetishism. By lifting the veil covering late-nineteenth-century music, their music became 'less perfect commodities', to invert Adorno's take on Wagner. *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony were neither commercially successful nor easily consumed, the latter described as scattering 'a lot of sand in the eyes',[100] creating 'the feeling of unease',[101] and 'permit[ting] no joy to erupt despite many interesting single lines'.[102] By micromanaging orchestras, disavowing clear programmes and not hiding performers behind voice doublings and blended timbre, Strauss and Mahler ceded a greater share of musical production and even artistry to performers. However, for contemporaries who still regarded composers as possessing a monopoly on artistic value, and who regarded the concert as an exchange between composer and audience, such concessions to performers were perceived as an evacuation of artistic value. This is why the music of Strauss and Mahler was so frequently criticized as inartistic and unmusical. In a world in which art

[95] Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav* Mahler, 35.
[96] Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav* Mahler, 98.
[97] Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav* Mahler, 100.
[98] Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav* Mahler, 117.
[99] Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav* Mahler, 117.
[100] Pirani, 'Berlin', 399.
[101] Lessmann, 'Von der Tonkünstlerversammlung', 349.
[102] I., 'Kunst und Wissenschaft', *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, 18 Mar. 1896, 1.

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was supposed to be autonomous, the produced quality of *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony made them seem like they were not art, that is, not intellectualized luxury goods.

Just as the music of Strauss and Mahler mediated a new relationship between composer and performer, its early reception demonstrates how commodity fetishism remained entrenched and enchanting. Debates and observations about orchestration remained focused on aesthetic form, not orchestra performers. Occasionally, the performed quality of Strauss's and Mahler's music was so obvious that reviewers pitied the performers or applauded their virtuosity, but, on the whole, the focus remained on orchestration as disembodied form and as a decision made by the composer. By the end of the nineteenth century, the composer-centrism of concert life was as entrenched as ever. So invisible were performers that the act of granting them greater artistic responsibility was perceived as an erasure of artistry. It was as if, by returning artistry to performers, art music was hidden from a composer-focused audience no longer able to access and consume it.

Even more than Liszt's symphonic poems, *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony created a sense of unfair exchange. The bourgeois subscription holder went to hear serious music and was instead served up sound effects, which might dazzle the uneducated, but which were incommensurate with the orchestral occasion and not befitting the audience's social station. In effect, *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony created an uncomfortable identification between the socially unequal consumer and artisanal performer. Paying good money for sound effects implied that either the performers deserved good pay or that the bourgeois audience's own labour, made socially equivalent to a technician, was overvalued. In tacit resistance to such unwelcomed levelling of social hierarchies, professional critics initially demeaned Strauss and Mahler as inartistic mockers of serious music who peddled shock entertainment. For reviewers versed in nineteenth-century aesthetics, to acknowledge the artistic value of Strauss and Mahler required a recalculation of social hierarchies and an admission that serious music was not actually autonomous from labour. In the face of such challenges to the social status of content-consuming concert-goers, it is little wonder that Strauss's *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony were simply not regarded as artistic.

Carl Dahlhaus argued repeatedly that turn-of-the-century music was its own epoch, neither late romantic, nor high modernist, but an era of 'stylistically open-ended' innovation.[103] He further identified sophisticated timbre as 'one of the crucial features of *fin-de-siècle* musical modernism', but suggested that this music had little to do with the major social and political developments of the time: 'No one could seriously maintain that the growth of the labour movement left traces in the music of Schönberg or Webern'.[104] Perhaps the prominence given to performers by what Dahlhaus called the 'emancipation of timbre' actually bears traces of labour ascendent. Some labour sympathies notwithstanding, Strauss and Mahler were not socialists, and we should not read their music as advocating for labour, intentionally or unintentionally. But their musical structures necessarily mediate changing social relationships of the time, including the growth of labour in public life and the increased desire among educated classes to better manage workers and their conditions. In 1905, Paul Marsop published in *Die Musik*, the leading

[103] Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 334.
[104] Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 243, 330.

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German-language music periodical, a multipart article on 'The Social Position of German Orchestra Musicians', where he asserted that 'in social position, the orchestra musician has not yet outgrown the Haydn and Mozart eras when bowing or blowing lackeys were considered equal to servants'.[105] In aiming to raise orchestra members' pay and the public's awareness of their still precarious lives, Marsop broke from late-nineteenth-century tradition and the relative silence of the musical press on its own social questions.

It was not a coincidence that, at the exact mid-century moment of the German *Gründerzeit* – when commodity production and accumulation fully took over Central European economics and culture – Wagnerians, New Germans and formalists aimed to distance themselves from it. The autonomy of art from commerce became the common faith of the serious music world, a conviction which encouraged an obscurement of musical labour and the relegation of the performing musician to servant and deliverer of the composer's content. The servitude of musical colour was merely one form that these social relations took. It was likewise, then, not a coincidence that Mahler and Strauss made orchestration and orchestra members visible at the exact moment that German socialism emerged from the shadows. In fact, the same concert season not only saw the world premieres of *Don Juan* and Mahler's First Symphony, but also the relaxation of the anti-socialist laws in the German Empire. For all the claims to art music's autonomy, it remained a commodity throughout this period, continually shaped by evolutions in commodity production and attitudes toward labour. Yet, these social relations in concert music routinely registered as mere relationships between things. Such is the magic of commodity fetishism.

[105] Paul Marsop, 'Die Soziale Lage der Deutschen Orchestermusiker', *Die Musik* 4/13 (1905): 13.

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