Gustav Mahler Sketches in the Moldenhauer Archives

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The sketches in the Moldenhauer Archives for Mahler's Seventh Symphony (with one leaf also representing the Sixth) are only one part of a considerable body of important manuscripts of that composer's works in the collection. Manuscripts connected with the Second,[1] Fourth, Ninth, and Tenth Symphonies and with several songs, to say nothing of letters and other documents, make the Archives a major source for scholars interested in Mahler's evolution as a composer and in his development as a person. This particular group of sketches is characteristic in its richness and complexity. The five leaves allow students to trace certain aspects of the creation of both the Sixth and the Seventh Symphonies. At the same time they raise many questions which may be ultimately impossible to answer.

In 1924, probably at the time when a facsimile of the principal manuscripts of the Tenth Symphony was being prepared, Alma Mahler asked Alban Berg to go through her collection of the composer's sketches, probably with a view to sorting them out and identifying their contents. Berg's description of this particular group is found with them on a separate bifolio of music paper used as a cover folder for the leaves.[2] It still proves a good general introduction to their contents.

5 lose Blätter/ größtenteils Skizzen zur VII. Symph./(letzter Satz u./ 1 Nachtmusik/ Dazu [?]/ 1 Blatt enthält <u>außerdem</u> ein wörtliches/ Zitat aus der VI. Symphonie/ auf der Rückseite mit Tinte[.]/ 3 andere Blätter auch viel Unbekanntes!/(auch in der X. Symph./ <u>nicht</u> Verwertetes.)/ 1 [das letze (mit "Blech" überschriebene)]/ eine ganz unbekannte 20 taktige/ Partie, wovon nur 12 Takte auf
eine / Verwandtschaft mit der VII. schließen
lassen./ Berg 9/7/24

5 loose [i.e. separate] leaves/ for the most part sketches for the Seventh Symphony (last movement and/ 1 Nachtmusik/ <u>In addition</u>/ 1 leaf also contains a literal citation from the Sixth Symphony/ on its reverse in ink. 3 other leaves also [contain] much that is unknown!/ (also <u>not</u> made use of/ in the Tenth Symphony.)/ 1 [leaf] [the last (superscribed "brass")]/ an entirely unknown 20-bar/ passage, of which only 12 bars/permit [one] to conclude a

relationship with the Seventh./ Berg 9 July 1924.

Before considering the contents of these leaves in more detail, a few aspects of their makeup should be noted. In addition to the five leaves with sketches, a single leaf of blank music paper is preserved with the group. Like four of the sketch pages, it bears the colophon "J. E. & Co." (i.e. Josef Eberle & Co., a Viennese firm),[3] although the colophon itself shows a somewhat different configuration when compared with that in the other leaves.

Berg identified the works represented in the sketches with a simple Roman numeral for the symphony and his name (i. e. "VII Berg") in the upper right-hand corner of the leaf, but he did not number them. In close proximity to Berg's notes, an unidentified later owner or librarian did add page numbers, however, using the pattern VII-1, VII-2, etc. Probably the same person also provided identifications of the work, and in some cases the movement--not always accurately--in the right margins. Although the numbering of the pages probably has little to do with the order in which the sketches were written down, it is used here as a matter of convenience in identifying on which leaves specific sketches are found. The side of the leaf on which the colophon appears is identified as the recto, although Mahler may have used the verso first.

None of the sketches is dated, but from other sources it is possible to estimate very roughly when they were composed. Relatively few details have been preserved about Mahler's progress in composing his middle-period symphonies, but some points are relatively clear. Judging from Mahler's letters, he had written much of the first three movements of the Sixth Symphony in the summer of 1903,[4] with the second and third closer to being finished than the first, and had perhaps at least sketched some of the last movement. The following summer, he completed the enormous finale of the Sixth, and also composed the second and fourth movements, both labeled *Nachtmusik*, of the Seventh. The remaining movements were completed the following year, 1905, in the period after mid-June to mid-August.[5] The draft full score of the first movement, which Mahler completed last, bears the inscription "Maiernigg 15 August 1905/ *Septima* finita." Thus, although it is always possible that Mahler drew on sketch material that he had jotted down earlier, more probably all of the sketches considered here belong within the period from the summer of 1903 to that of 1905, and the majority of those for the Seventh in 1904 and 1905. We can then narrow the dates of some of the specific sketches. The sketches for the theme used in the first movement of the Sixth Symphony may go back to 1903, but the movement itself was completed in 1904.[6] In the latter year the first of the *Nachtmusik* movements was also completed, thus the sketch for it in the Moldenhauer Archives may well belong to the same time. The first, third, and fifth movements of the Seventh were completed in 1905, and the sketches for them most probably belong either to 1904 or 1905.

The sketches for the Seventh Symphony preserved in this group fall chronologically between some important earlier ones for the first and fifth movements found in a manuscript labeled Mahler's "last sketchbook" in the Theatermuseum of the Nationalbibliothek in Vienna[7] (together with two leaves torn from another sketchbook,[8] in the Bibliothèque musicale Gustav Mahler in Paris), and a later and more advanced preliminary draft of a portion of the third movement in the Bruno Walter Collection of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. The only other manuscript currently known that precedes the fair copy belonging to the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam is the dated orchestral draft of the first movement noted earlier, also in the Bruno Walter Collection.[9]

By the time these sketches were made, Mahler had developed the habit, while working on one composition, of saving notations of other musical ideas for possible future use.[10] What quickly stands out in examining these pages is the large number of unused sketches. In studying the entire series of pages, the material may be divided into three groups: those sketches clearly connected with completed compositions, in this case the Sixth and Seventh Symphonies; those which have some similarity to themes in the Seventh but still differ in significant ways from the forms found in the symphony; and finally, those sketches which have no overt connection with the symphonies and which remained unused. About the last, quite substantial group we can only conjecture as to whether Mahler at some point considered incorporating at least some of the material in one of these symphonies, or was saving it for possible use in a later work (see below, discussion of the Third Group, for one interesting connection).

First Group

The material Mahler used in the Sixth and Seventh Symphonies may be identified as follows:

1. A two-bar sketch in ink for a theme from the first movement of the Sixth Symphony, equivalent to measures 77-78 in the published score, but in G Major rather than F (leaf 1, recto). As noted earlier (in note 6) this theme is in fact the one which Alma Mahler indicates as her husband's musical embodiment of her. All but one of the remaining sketches

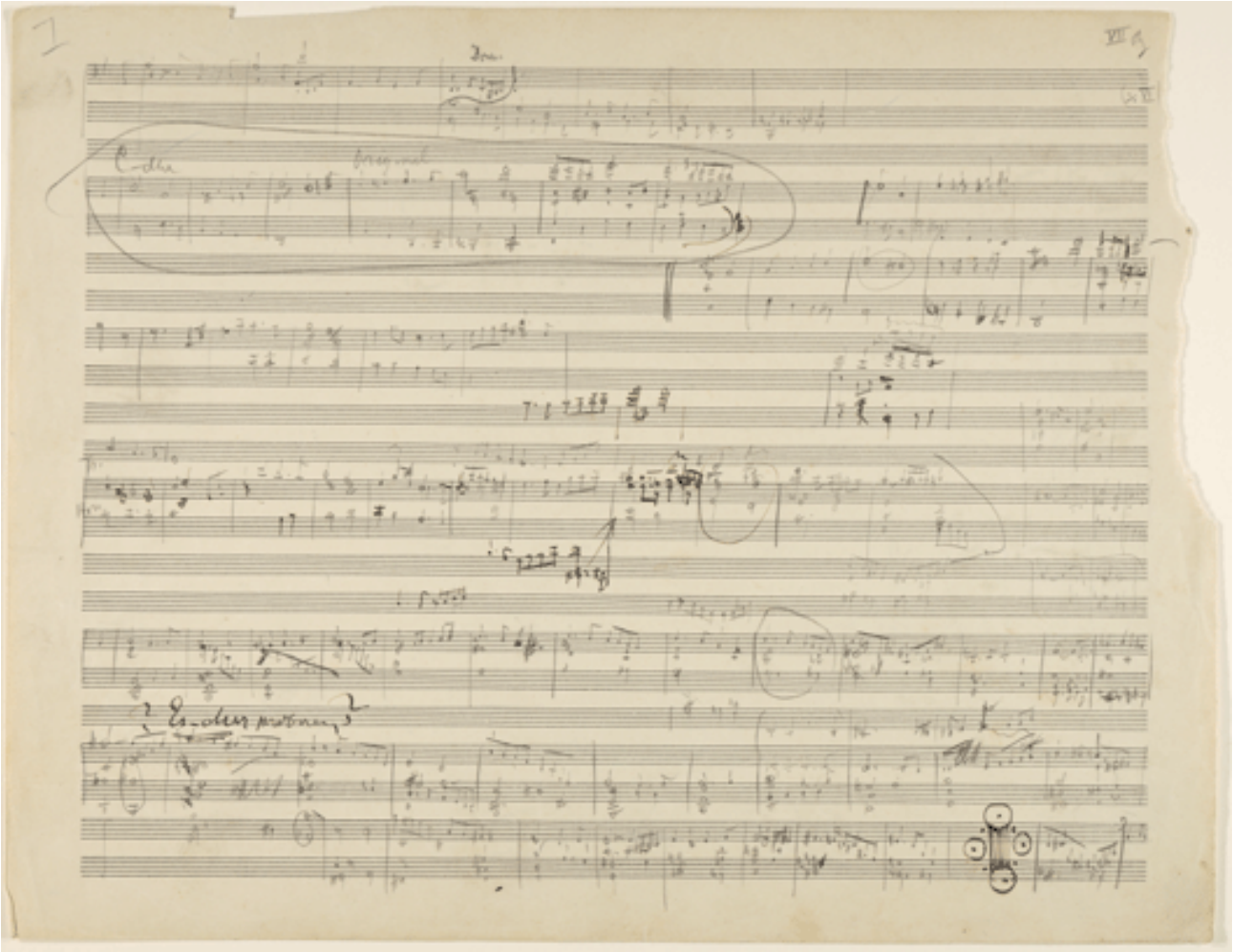

Illustration 1 (leaf 1, verso)

Moldenhauer-Sammlungen in der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München, Mus. ms. 22741

on this page show a variety of different brief elaborations of this theme. The final sketch, four bars in pencil, is connected with a passage in bars 25 of the next-to-last system on the verso of this leaf (see 2a in the third group of sketches discussed below).

2. Essentially one continuous sketch (leaf 5, recto) of the material equivalent to measures 83-105 in the second movement of the completed score of the Seventh Symphony, the first Nachtmusik. "As" (A-flat) is indicated as the key in the upper left-hand corner, and the meter is clearly 4/4. "Trio" appears above the first system, and this passage is indeed from the first trio of the movement.

3a. Illustration 1 (leaf 1, verso). Forty measures of sketches for material that extends from measures 7-26 in the fifth movement of the Seventh Symphony. The illustration shows the work in progress at a formative stage in which the gradual development of the order of the musical ideas and the tonal pattern is still being worked out. The material, however, is not found in its final sequence, and brief gaps, variants, and some unused bars are apparent. The first two systems were originally in B-flat Major, but the first 8 bars of the second are circled, and "C-dur" is marked above the first bar (to indicate the needed transposition), as well as "Original" above the fourth (to indicate that it is to remain as notated). This second system is an early form of bars 15-21 (with the two final measures differing from their final shape). Mahler then writes out a variant of the whole passage from 15-20, beginning in C, in the third system following the double bar. The equivalent of measures 23-26, with a different four-bar continuation, appears on the first system of the page. The fourth and fifth systems show two variants of the equivalents of bars 7-13, with two further bars that differ from the published score in the lower system. The material following the ninth measure and the bar line in ink in the fifth system belongs to the sketch on the lower systems of the page. Thus, the order of the material on the page is the reverse of that found in the completed work. System l shows measures 23-26, with an unused continuation; system 2, measures 15-21, with a different continuation; system 3, measures 15-20; systems 4 and 5, variants of measures 7-13. This sketch page also provides an extended example of unused material. It is cited as 2a in the third group below. Before the last full measure on the page one finds a late example of a "doodle" by Mahler, perhaps designed to fill a measure that Mahler had left blank with a view to providing a connection between the bars on either side. 3b. Seventeen bars of material used in the finale (leaf 3, verso). The sketches appear on the first two systems (of three staves each), with a one-bar insert following an entirely different three-bar sketch in the third system. The first system includes the equivalents of bars 7 and 8, the main fanfare combination (presenting two motives in counterpoint) of the movement. Four unused bars elaborating variants of the fanfare lead to the equivalent of measures 43-46. The second system preserves bars 38-43 (or their later equivalent in measures 566-70), with an insert of bar 41 indicated in the third system. The whole passage is circled, with a line pointing to the earlier bars 43-46 in the first system. The uncircled last three bars in the second system remained in this form unused in the symphony. The remaining sketches on this page are identified below (group 2, no. 2 and group 3, no. 5).

3c. Illustration 2 (leaf 2, verso). This sketch is the most extended in the entire group, and one of the most fascinating. Unlike the passage shown in Illustration 1 (see 3a above), it is more or less continuous, presented in five systems, all but one in four staves, the other in three, rather than the two or three found in the earlier sketch. These features suggest a somewhat more advanced stage in the composition of the movement. The passage shown is toward the end of the fifth movement (not the first, as indicated in Berg's identification at the right margin), and is roughly equivalent to measures 446-511, with some variants included of specific bars or brief passages. The material largely appears a semitone lower than in the final version. Thus Mahler was in the process of arriving at a tonal scheme for the movement. A key signature for D-flat is marked in the left corner of the page. The very light annotation in

red pencil at the top of the page indicates that the music is to be transposed "1/2 [Ton] höher,"

and "C-moll" at the end of the second system indicates the specific key, after "H-moll" had been considered. The passage shows the contrapuntal combination of several of the most important themes of the movement, and most strikingly, the cyclical return of the main theme of the first movement. The theme that appears in the uppermost staff of the first two bars, interestingly, is the same one found in the "last sketchbook"[11] and also in the sketch pages in the Bibliothéque musicale Gustav Mahler. The specific musical content of each system may be identified as follows:

1. 17 bars, equivalent to measures 446-61, with one canceled measure.

2. 16 bars, equivalent to measures 462-77. Alternative possibilities are indicated in the staves below bars 473-76. The eighth-note theme found in the last two bars of this system, as well as the first of the next, was later eliminated.

3. 6 bars, equivalent to bars 478-83. The original fourth and fifth bars were replaced by the alternatives below them.

4. 14 bars, equivalent to measures 481-99, thus incorporating the alternate forms of the measures inserted below the preceding system.

The letters B and A, in both ink and red pencil, above the insert sign at the end of the fifth bar suggest two sketches so labeled that are now missing, and probably supplied bars 486-91, not found in this manuscript. The material in the additional staff above the system was not used.

5. 13 bars, equivalent to measures 500-11. The three bars following the first circled measure were not used in the final form of the movement and were later replaced by the equivalent of the two measures 504-5.

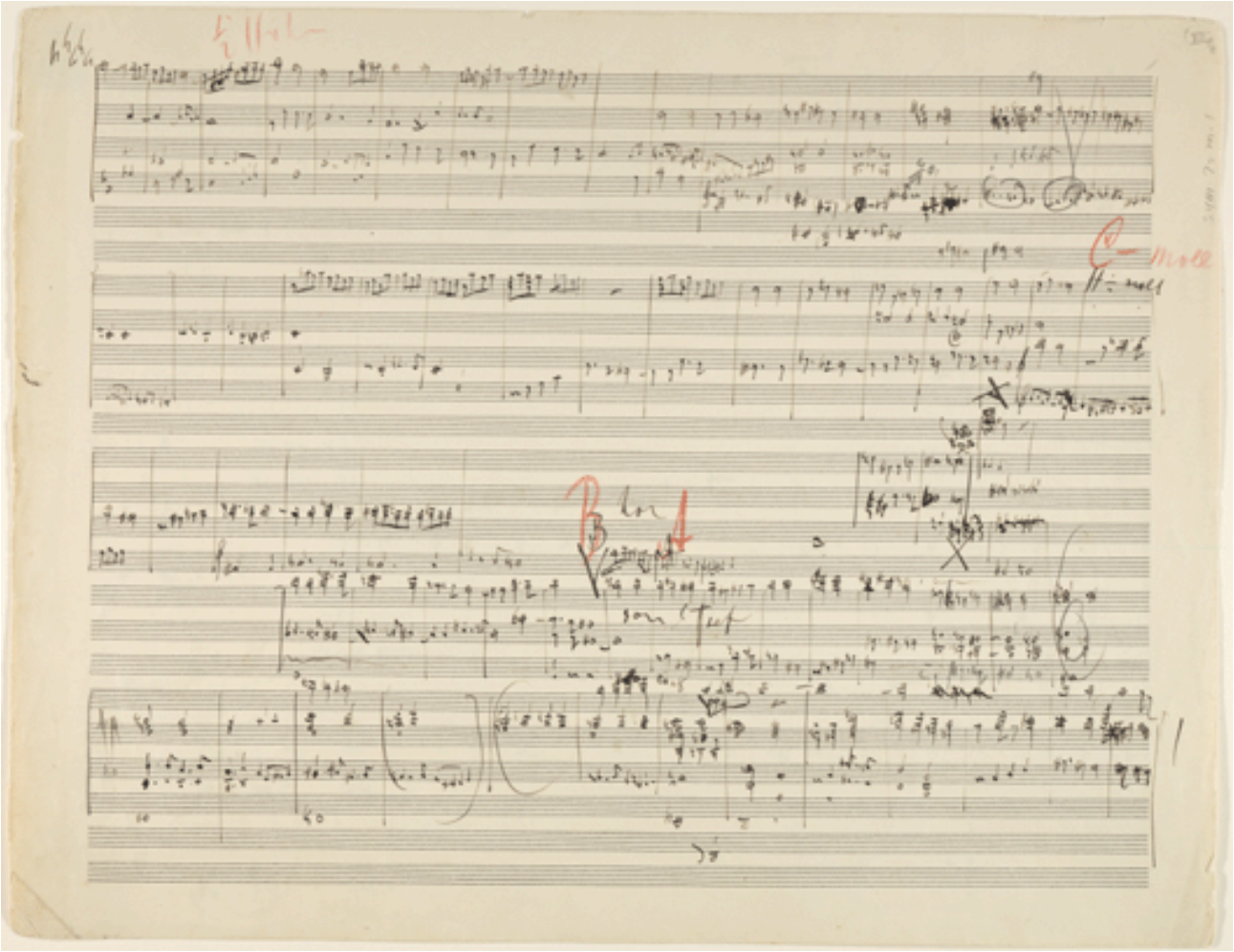

Illustration 2 (leaf 2, verso)

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Second Group

These sketches are similar in some respects to material used in the Seventh Symphony, but not identical to the parallel themes in the completed work.

1. An eight-bar sketch in C-sharp Minor with two alternative or additional measures (leaf 5, verso, bottom of the page) shows some features of the intervallic and rhythmic structure of the principal Allegro theme in the first movement of the Seventh Symphony

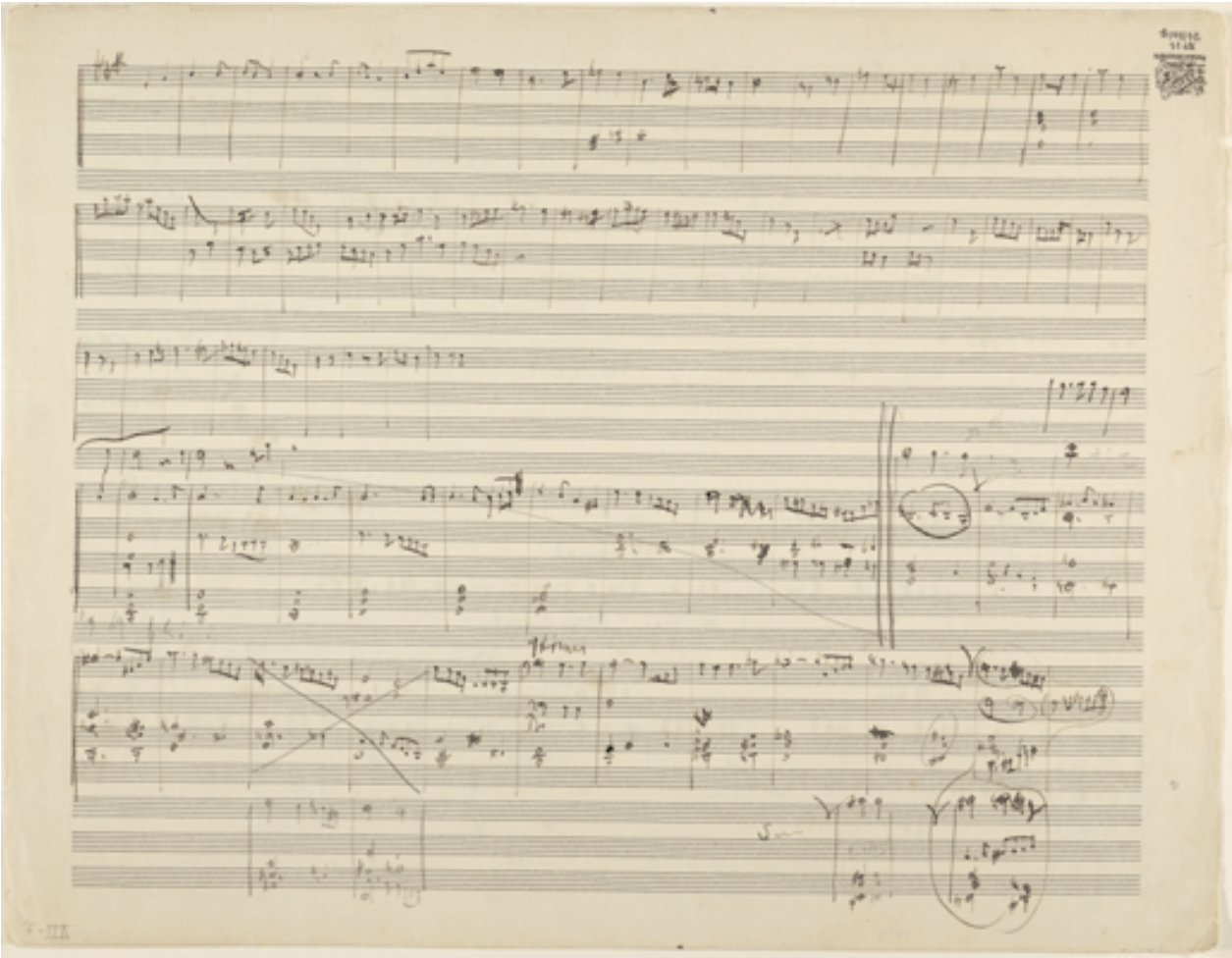

Illustration 3 (leaf 2, recto)

Moldenhauer-Sammlungen in der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München, Mus. ms. 22741

(see measures 50-52). Significant differences are also apparent, however, and the material was not used in this form or key. Thus, the connection with the symphony cannot be regarded as conclusive.

2. Sketches of three and two bars (leaf 3, verso, third and fourth systems) of a motive similar in its opening beats to one first found in bar 56 of the fourth movement of the Seventh Symphony. The key is apparently C, and the meter 4/4. Leaf 5, verso, first system, preserves two bars of the same motive, written in time values twice as long as the preceding.

3. A continuous twenty-one-bar sketch beginning and ending in F Major, with the superscription "Blech" (Brass), which seems, because of its nearly constant triplet motion, to have a scherzolike character similar to that of the third movement of the Seventh Symphony. The thematic material, other than the scale patterns, however, differs, and the brass are not called for in the equivalent passages in that movement. "VII ?" in what appears to be Berg's hand, with an arrow pointing down to the fourth bar, draws attention to the quarter-note figure C F E D. A similar figure E-flat A-flat G F also appears as a variant in the third bar of the sketch of the Trio for the second movement of the symphony (leaf 5, recto, first system), but the surrounding music is entirely different. The question mark after the VII suggests that Berg may have had doubts about the attribution, and the connection is very tenuous. If this passage was at some point thought of as potentially usuable in the symphony, Mahler later abandoned the idea.

Third Group

This group of sketches shows even less overt thematic connection with either the Sixth or the Seventh Symphonies, or, with one important exception, with other known works of Mahler.

l. See Illustration 3. A fifty-one-bar sketch in A Major and in 2/4 time (leaf 2, recto, upper 3 systems). Although laid out in three-stave Particell format, the larger part of the sketch offers only the upper melodic line. Supporting harmony and melodic variants or counterpoints are indicated in just a few bars.

2a. See Illustration 1, bottom three systems. An approximately thirty-six-bar sketch, in three two-stave systems on the lower half of the page (leaf 1, verso), beginning in C Major and in 4/4 time. A number of variants appear in the staves above the last six measures of the first system. Mahler has written "?Es-dur probiren?" (try E-flat Major) in ink above the second and third bars of the second system. On the recto side of this leaf, on a system in pencil below the sketches in ink for the Sixth Symphony, the composer has written an alternative version for bars 2-5 of this brace. As noted earlier, a curious "doodle" in ink by Mahler (many such figures appear in his early manuscripts, but few at this time) is found one and one-half measures before the end of the sketch.

2b. See Illustration 3. A twenty-four-bar sketch beginning in C and in 4/4 time (leaf 2, recto), in two lower systems (the fourth and fifth on the page) of four staves each (with variants in

bars below the second system). This sketch shows an elaboration of that in 2a. A double bar appears at the end of the ninth measure, and these initial nine bars have a cancellation line drawn through them. Quite astonishingly, above the first three bars of the soprano line, Mahler has added a counterpoint that anticipates the opening of the principal melody for the first movement of the Ninth Symphony (the pitches are E D-E D-E G, one step lower than in the symphony, and the rhythm similar to measures 7-9 in the second violin part). Thus while the main melody of the sketch was not used, and this passage was actually canceled, Mahler anticipated a portion of the theme of the later work. Did Mahler consciously or unconsciously remember the theme when he came to write the Ninth? We will never be absolutely certain. Bars 15 and 16 are also canceled, but susbstitute measures are provided beneath the lower brace. Two inserts, again under the lower brace, are marked between measures 22 and 23. A counterpoint and an alternative to the upper line are also indicated above the fourth system for bars 1-3 and 10-12.

3. Three sketches, of 21, 8, and 33 bars, in G Major, G Minor and C Major (leaf 3 recto, the entire page). The first and last are in duple time (4/4 or 2/2) and the second is in 3/2. As in the first sketch of this group, although the material is laid out in 3- and 2-stave systems, the principal melody is only intermittently filled out with supporting lines. Although a one-bar gap is found between the first and second sketches, and a system and a half between the second and third, the first and the third are related in their material and all three seem to be part of a larger whole.

4. A thirty-bar sketch in C Major and in 2/4 time, on the second and third systems of the page (leaf 5, verso). Variants and additions appear above the first system and below the second. An incomplete bar, with upbeat, appears immediately below the third system, and seems to be related to the beginning of the sketch. Below this bar, a brief sketch (apparently two and a half bars) in very light pencil shows the opening of an entirely different melody in what seems to be 6/8 time.

5. A four-bar sketch, with an alternative upper part in the last two measures, apparently in G Major (leaf 3, verso, the system at the bottom of the page). No meter is indicated. The first and last bars have four beats, the second and third, three.

[1] The Archives include a solo piano reduction of the symphony. The hand in the manuscript does not appear to be Mahler's, but views differ on this point. If the arrangement is not by Mahler, its author remains uncertain.

[2] Similar comments by Berg are found with at least three other manuscripts, one in the Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, and two in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. The first is dated July 7, 1924, the other two July 9, 1924, the same day indicated in the Moldenhauer manuscript. All are reproduced and transcribed in Gustav Mahler, *Symphonische Entwürfe, Faksimile nach den Skizzen aus der Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek und der Pierpont Morgan Library New York*, ed. by Renate Hilmar-Voit (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1991).

[3] The third leaf has no colophon and is clearly the work of a different manufacturer.

[4] In a letter of July 11, 1904, Mahler wrote to Alma asking her to bring the manuscripts of the second and third movements of the Sixth with her to Maiernigg, since he had forgotten to take them himself. Thus those movements were certainly composed the preceding summer. Presumably he had brought material for the outer movements with him, but we do not know how far work on them had already advanced. See *Ein Glück ohne Ruh'. Die Briefe Gustav Mahlers an Alma*, ed., with commentary, by Henry-Louis de La Grange, Günther Weiss, and Knud Martner (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1995), p. 215. See also H.-L. de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler: Chronique d'une vie, II, L'age d'or de Vienne (1900-1907)* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), pp. 360-61, 1155.

[5] In a frequently cited letter of June 8, 1910, Mahler recalled his difficulties in resuming work on the Seventh in the summer of 1905. See Gustav Mahler, *Facsimile Edition of the Seventh Symphony, Commentary* volume by Donald Mitchell and Edward R. Reilly (Amsterdam: Rosbeek Publishers, 1995), especially the "Chronology" by Mitchell, pp. 19-29. See also *Ein Glück ohne Ruh'*, pp. 218, 414.

[6] Alma Mahler speaks of Mahler completing the draft of the first movement of the Sixth in the summer of 1904, and reports: "After he had drafted the first movement he came down from the wood to tell me he had tried to express me in a theme. 'Whether I've succeeded, I don't know; but you'll have to put up with it.' This is the great soaring theme of the first movement of the Sixth." This is the very theme found on the recto of the first leaf of the Moldenhauer sketches. See Alma Mahler, *Gustav Mahler, Memories and Letters*, 4th ed., trans. Basil Creighton, ed. Donald Mitchell and Knud Martner (London: Cardinal Books, 1990), p. 70, and *Gustav Mahler, Erinnerungen und Briefe* (Amsterdam: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1949), p. 92. This passage leaves open the possibility that the sketch may belong to the summer of 1904 rather than 1903. We do not know how far Mahler had gotten with work on the first movement in 1903.

[7] See Stephen Hefling, "*'Ihm in die Lieder zu blicken'*: Mahler's Seventh Symphony Sketchbook," in *Mahler Studies*, ed. S. Hefling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 169-216, for a detailed study of the Seventh Symphony material, with facsimiles and transcriptions, in this sketchbook. The title of the volume comes from a note by Anna Bahr-Mildenburg, accompanying the

volume, to the effect that Mahler's father-in-law, the painter Karl Moll, found it on Mahler's breast when he died. Hefling raises serious questions about the validity of the story. Two pages from the volume are also reproduced in the *Commentary* volume for the *Facsimile Edition of the Seventh Symphony*, p. 76.

[8] The fact that these two pages have nine staves on each page, as compared with six in the Vienna sketchbook, confirms the existence of two different volumes.

[9] Pages from all of these manuscripts are also illustrated in my study, "The Manuscripts of the Seventh Symphony" in the *Commentary* volume of the *Facsimile Edition of the Seventh Symphony*, pp. 75-95.

[10] See Hefling, "Mahler's Seventh Symphony sketchbook," pp. 172-183, for a review of what is known of Mahler's use of sketchbooks. He seems to have begun saving musical ideas unconnected with the work that he was currently composing from about the summer of 1901.

[11] See Hefling, "Mahler's Seventh Symphony Sketchbook," p. 198, and the *Commentary* volume of the *Facsimile Edition of the Seventh Symphony*, p. 76, for reproductions of the page in question.