

Nevertheless, an orchestra delights in the work of a conductor who, whatever his way of working, achieves exciting, consistent results. Orchestras as well as audiences are among the admirers of the emotionally extravagant Bernstein, and orchestras usually loved (with intervals for hatred) the exigent, humorous, witty, impish but often possessed Beecham. The great conductors' qualities—insight, communication and musicianship—are immediately recognizable though they defy analysis.

Their relationships with orchestras are equally mysterious. Toscanini, Mahler and Georg Szell (who rapidly turned the Cleveland Orchestra from a respectable provincial ensemble into an instrument of immense precision and polish) were remorseless tyrants. Barbirolli, a slave of music, expected his orchestra to share his slavery and usually found it willing to do so. Beecham, an eccentric wit in public, provided the orchestras he rehearsed with a dazzling display of wit, eccentricity and 'temperament' in the most romantic sense of that word. Bruno Walter seemed, in his later years, to regard any orchestra as a favourite collection of nephews and nieces. There is, perhaps, a style and an approach for every conductor. There are those who regard the essential skills as those concerned with handling men, but there are those who are convinced that anybody who knows how he wants to conduct a work, however simple or however complex, and how to demonstrate the effects he wants to achieve without too much talk or waste of time, will find any orchestra eager, co-operative and enthusiastic.

NINE

Consolidation and Expansion

It was hardly necessary, by the time Wagner's works were written, to think of expanding the orchestra any further, except perhaps for the sake of dramatic effect in the opera-house, though such expansions would provide inevitable additions to the vocabulary of the concert hall. The power, range and mass of orchestral tone had reached, it seemed, the point at which additions were not needed. Even Wagner tubas, which gave the brass section the homogeneity of tone which composers had desired for a century, did not become a permanent feature of the orchestra. The composer's colour palette had achieved almost its complete range without Wagner's invention, and as composers began to be concerned with blending and contrasting their colour rather than with massiveness and weight of tone, they seemed to be hardly necessary.

Massive as Bruckner's music is, from his First Symphony composed in 1865 and 1866 to his Ninth, left unfinished at his death in 1896, its massiveness comes from its time-scale and its harmonic processes rather than from an expanded orchestra. Despite Bruckner's adoration of Wagner, only the slow movement of the Seventh Symphony, written as an elegy to Wagner after the news of the composer's death had reached Austria, uses Wagner tubas. Though Bruckner's orchestral style owes more to Wagner's than to any other composer's, as does his harmonic scale and time-scheme, and, although well-meaning friends insisted that Bruckner should revise his music to make its orchestration still more Wagnerian, Bruckner was content with Beethoven's instruments balanced as Wagner wanted them balanced in performance, with the tuba, which had become obligatory in the 1860s. The climax of the Seventh Symphony is a single cymbal clash, the only cymbal clash in Bruckner's work, and this was an addition suggested by friends who did not realize the true nature of Bruckner's work or recognize that he was too independent in outlook to need additional Wagnerisms.

In many respects, Bruckner abandoned a great deal of Wagnerian colour. His oboes or trumpets, for example, will send a line of

glowing colour across an almost neutrally tinted score, but the climax of a movement is usually a matter of stark black and white, the entire orchestra thundering an affirmation in a unison four or even five octaves deep, the allurements of orchestral colour abandoned.

For reasons like these, the saxophones, invented by the Belgian Adolphe Sax and patented in 1846, never became regular members of the orchestra but found a place, like Wagner tubas, in the 'additional brass' which could be called upon when needed. Saxophones provide a family of fourteen instruments, from soprano, in the piccolo range, to double-bass. They are brass instruments played through a reed, which puts them into a class of their own, and they have a complete homogeneity of tone throughout their register; this might have been an asset to composers who had been searching throughout the nineteenth century for such homogeneity. The saxophones, however, refuse to blend or merge with other orchestral instruments, and their obstinate individuality has meant that composers have reserved them for moments when their characteristic tone, ingratiating but rather oily, is appropriate to some special purpose.

Ten years after the invention of the instrument, the Alsatian composer Georg Kastner used them in his opera *Le dernier Roi de Juda*. Berlioz arranged his *Chant Sacré* for an ensemble of six saxophones; both Meyerbeer and Bizet (in *L'Arlésienne*) wrote for saxophones, but in solo passages where their inability to blend into the ensemble would not be a disadvantage. Vincent D'Indy, the French composer who died in 1931 at the age of eighty, found that a quartet of saxophones could be invaluable in supporting voices in unaccompanied music because, played quietly, their tone could hide behind that of the voices and ensure accuracy of vocal intonation without obtruding themselves. In 1902 Richard Strauss asked for a quartet of saxophones in his *Sinfonia Domestica*, using them in the monster orchestra he demanded for his works at the turn of the century simply to add their tone to the harmonies in the middle of the orchestral register.

By the end of the First World War, saxophones had begun to appear in American jazz groups and by the 1930s four saxophones had become, with drums, the essential instruments in the dance music of the period; their players exploited the instrument's special qualities of tone and gave it an agility earlier composers had not attempted to explore or develop. It was, perhaps, its combination of glib virtuosity with assertive oiliness of tone which persuaded Vaughan Williams, in 1930, to add an E flat saxophone to his orchestra in *Job* to depict Job's 'comforters', who are seen in the work as hypocrites. The saxophone reappears to make a similar

effect in Vaughan Williams's Sixth Symphony, where it has a solo passage to play in the Scherzo.

While the saxophone failed to establish itself in the orchestra, the bass clarinet became indispensable. The bass clarinet began its life with a complete chromatic range, and its individual tone, tending to be hollow and sinister, even with the suggestion of a rattle in its lowest register, not only strengthened but added a new quality to the bass of the orchestra. In the *Case Noisette* ballet by Tchaikovsky, the Sugar Plum Fairy's dance is scored for celeste and bass clarinet, the fairy tinkling of the celeste offset by the hollow, sinister sound of the bass clarinet plunging into its deepest register.

Most other nineteenth-century additions to the orchestra were really effects available to the composer when he needed them. Those who, like Brahms as well as Bruckner, were content with a balanced orchestra of the instruments which satisfied Beethoven, took no notice of them. Brahms never needed more power or more colour than Beethoven had bequeathed to his followers, so that many listeners think of Brahms as a composer whose interest in the orchestra was restricted to the physical capacities of its instruments and the most straightforward way of disposing of his music among the available instruments. While Brahms never set out to colour his music as though colour could be an important element in any work, his use of the orchestra in pastel shades and for the sake of mellow, glowing effects rather than brilliance is always entirely individual. The first entry of the violins, for example, in the Second Symphony—high in the ledger lines above the treble clef after the horns and cellos have crooned their lullaby, is not an effect which blazes vividly—but it lifts the heart with a sense of ease and utter naturalness; had he brought it in with harmonies of thirds and sixths, it would be more colourful and far more sentimental, but its simplicity alone is a thrilling quality.

The Song of Destiny, perhaps the most grimly outspoken declaration of pessimism that Brahms ever made, contrasts the happiness of a world of blessed spirits with the stresses and miseries of human life; the orchestra opens the work in a mood of absolute bliss that ends with a solo flute alone above the orchestra dying away almost as though it was pronouncing a benediction. Brahms's handling of the orchestra for his own purposes was masterly.

To him, the orchestra was a single, many-voiced instrument, rich and varied in tone but essentially homogeneous. The slow movement of the Second Symphony opens with a descending melody from the cellos; it is accompanied by an ascending melody from the bassoons, which, though it becomes almost as important as the cello theme in the growth of the movement, appears almost

as though it is only an accompaniment to the cellos' song, and most conductors take the composer's aim to be a blend of tone which minimizes the differences between the instrument's colour. But though such effects are common even in the most relaxed and ingratiating of his symphonies, Beecham and a few other conductors have shown that the work loses nothing of its quality and integrity of thought if such passages are played with a real but unexaggerated sense of colour. If colour as an end in itself was not one of his concerns, it seems entirely unnecessary to treat his music, as many conductors do, as though it is all polished and well-cared-for mahogany.

The appearance of the nineteenth-century nationalist composers in Czechoslovakia and Russia did not noticeably expand the orchestra though it developed new varieties of colour through the mere fact of nationalism. The music of Smetana and Dvořák, for example, often provides vivid new colours simply by writing for customary instruments in a national way; the Bohemian delight in strong, pungent woodwind tone, less refined than that of players from Germany, Austria or France, is a Czech national style which delighted all Europe. The Russians, too, for all the novelty of their music, found new colours in the familiar palette. Balakirev's symphonies—and Balakirev was the teacher and theorist of the splendid first generation, the 'mighty handful', the 'Five', of Russian composers—wrote melodies never far from folk song and suggested vistas of hugely extending landscape and vast distances with a traditional orchestra. Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, arguably the supreme if awkward, imperfectly organized masterpiece of Russian nationalist music, makes its effect by the spacing of the instruments of the normal orchestra; the great cathedral bells of the coronation scene are a magnificent effect, but Mussorgsky recognized that they belong only to that single scene.

Tchaikovsky, a great non-nationalist conventionally trained and distrustful of the school of Balakirev (which rejected any conventional, systematic training and regarded Tchaikovsky as a composer handicapped by his conservatoire training at St Petersburg) created an entirely original, individual orchestral style not by adding new and exotic instruments but by exploiting the conventional orchestra's capacity for emotional expression and vivid colour; Tchaikovsky's exultations, miseries, glooms and depressions are all gigantic, and the music of his ballets, disciplined and controlled by stage action, is vivid and colourful enough to set the scene almost without décor and designs. The *Pathetic Symphony*, composed in 1893, adds only one flute, one clarinet and a tuba, with bass drum, cymbals and gong to the orchestra which satisfied Brahms in his First Symphony, almost twenty years before, and

Beethoven, in the first movement of his Ninth, seventy years before; furthermore, Tchaikovsky uses his extra percussion only sparingly. The bass drum and cymbals make their presence felt in the wild march of the Scherzo, but the great crash which dispels the lyrical dream of the second subject in the first movement comes from timpani and orchestra, not from the potentially deafening percussion, and there is a single gong stroke, marked 'piano', in the finale; it is the signal for the tragic passage for brass which romantically minded commentators have compared to a descent into the grave and the final lament of the *Coda*.

The master of exotic orchestration among the Russians was Rimsky-Korsakov, who grew to be doubtful about Balakirev's anti-academic prejudices and undertook a strict academic training of his own devising. Rimsky-Korsakov's more professional attitude led to his individual, and remarkably brilliant, orchestral style. Like Tchaikovsky, he understood the areas in which each instrument is specially effective or lamentably dull, and he wrote for instruments in the range which he needed for colour and brilliance and not simply for pitch. He was more enterprising than Tchaikovsky in his use of percussion, but the brilliant surface of his music owes more to his habit of displaying solo instruments against a background strongly coloured in its own right, and by deliberately diversifying the orchestra by setting important themes in vivid instrumental ranges while maintaining bright colours in the subsidiary parts. In addition, harps, percussion and the instruments which exist for effects are used to splash colour brightly across his scores. His delight in quasi-oriental melody in *Scheherazade*, *Sadko* and *Le Cœq d'Or* gives Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestra a brilliance all its own. His professionalism and his sympathy with the other members of the Balakirev group made him their conscience, ready to orchestrate and organize music which they left incomplete or disorganized, and though his complexion and orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and *Khovantchina* is now frowned upon as too exotic and too brilliant for the subject matter, it made possible the triumph of these works in the world's opera-houses. The more recent treatment of these works by Shostakovich, another superb master of the orchestra, is more sober, perhaps more genuinely Russian, but it does not remove the world's debt of gratitude for Rimsky-Korsakov, who treated them as he treated his own music, in a way designed to exploit the contrasts of tone possible in the orchestra.

Such expansion as there was in the orchestra was an expansion of the percussion section. Tchaikovsky's use of the celeste in *Casse Noisette* is one of the earliest examples of the use of melodic percussion; the celeste, unlike the side drum and bass drum, cannot

be dismissed simply as an effect. Like Tchaikovsky, other composers found the celeste's purity of tone, clarity and delicacy, invaluable. Mahler in his Sixth Symphony found a means of suggesting that the instrument has reserves of strength not discovered by Tchaikovsky, but in the closing passage of *Das Lied von der Erde* he, as did Delius at the end of *Sea Drift*, made a wonderful effect through its serene tinkling above an atmosphere of pain and loss.

The xylophone, with its hard, penetrating, unresonant tone has a slightly longer history: Saint-Saëns used it in the less than passionately serious *Danse Macabre* in 1874 and twelve years later in the tongue-in-cheek humour of the *Carnaval des Animaux*. The xylophone was of course available to Mahler, who had a use for every instrument with a tone and personality of its own.

Apart from the tuned percussion instruments, a number of new 'effects' instruments were taken into the percussion section. The gong found a place not only in Tchaikovsky's *Pathetic Symphony*, where it is marked 'ad libitum' and is heard only for a single stroke. The gong became the natural instrument for creating an atmosphere of foreboding, for expressing the sinister and fearful by means of strokes rarely marked as stronger than 'piano'; the free reverberation of a beaten gong keeps the sound of a 'piano' stroke alive for a considerable time; a gong struck 'fortissimo' would obliterate the sound of the rest of the orchestra.

Side-drums and the deeper tenor drums, hardly used in the orchestra since Handel had employed a side drum in the last movement of the Fireworks Music in 1749 became more frequently employed, and tambourines occasionally joined them. With the tuned percussion, antique cymbals often tuned to a definite pitch, the glockenspiel, forgotten since Mozart had scored it into *The Magic Flute* and, occasionally, tubular bells, the percussion section grew more in the nineteenth century than any other section of the orchestra.

Wagner died in 1883, at the age of seventy. Within ten years of his death, his heirs Gustav Mahler (born in 1860) and Richard Strauss (born in 1864), had made their presence felt. Mahler grew up in poverty in Bohemia, but in a Jewish enclave where music and culture in general were German. Strauss, the son of a fine horn player in the Munich Court Orchestra, was born into opera and concert music while Mahler's first musical experiences were of folk songs and the military music of the nearby barracks. As a child, the young Mahler was an unusually gifted pianist and he was admitted into the Vienna Conservatoire at the age of fifteen; he composed his first large-scale work, *Das Klagen Lied*, when he was twenty; this, he later said, was the first work in which he had

found his own voice and style. Strauss, who had first had enrolled behind Brahms in the ranks of the anti-Wagnerians—his father had disliked Wagner and Wagner's music and proved to be a thorn in the flesh of Wagner's conductor disciples—composed his orchestral fantasy *Aus Italien* in 1886 and *Don Juan*, the first of this symphonic poems two years later in 1888, the year in which Mahler completed his First Symphony. By this time, Strauss was as dedicated a Wagnerian as Mahler had always been, and liked to think of himself, as 'Richard the Second', the spiritual heir of the great Richard Wagner.

For many years, critics and would-be historians have liked to couple the name of Mahler with that of Bruckner, a composer whom he knew and liked but with whom he had little in common. However, to himself and to the world at large Strauss was a man apart. Strauss thought of himself as the great revolutionary, carrying on the work of Richard the First, but Brahms, who had first become aware of Mahler as an unusually gifted young conductor, when shown one of Mahler's scores, said that Mahler was the true revolutionary; whether he said this in admiration or in horror was not reported. In 1888, the two young men seemed to occupy an almost identical position, both brilliant conductors, both devoted to the music and the musical doctrines of Wagner, both fascinated by the power and weight, the colour and brilliance, of the orchestra at its hugest. Strauss, as a brilliant young conductor, did more than Mahler himself to draw attention to and to perform Mahler's music, for Mahler exercised his terrifying perfectionism as a conductor chiefly on the works of others; as Director of the Imperial Opera in Vienna, Mahler offered to resign because the court authorities refused to allow a performance of Strauss's *Salome*.

Strauss's orchestra began as large: by the time he reached *Ein Heldenleben*, in 1898, the *Sinfonia Domestica*, completed in 1903 and the *Alpensinfonie* in 1916, it had become gargantuan. It builds on a large and luscious body of string tone, which provides almost all his music with a luxurious basic texture. Even in the Hero's battle against his 'Adversaries' (one of the most unflattering portrayals of music critics; the whole battle is easier to accept as high spirits than as the struggle of a daring adventurer against hide-bound reactionaries who hinder his work) he never really discards the rich, cushioning sound of his strings, not even for the sake of adding acerbity to the out-of-tune fanfares and the spiky woodwind figures to which the forlorn hope of advancing critics marches into battle and a vastly noisy but easily achieved defeat.

No composer knew the orchestra better than Strauss. His ideal was a more than Wagnerian richness, so that he demanded not only unusual instruments—the archaic oboe d'amore, for example,

in the *Sinfonia Domestica*—but also more and more of the standard instruments on which tone and colour really depend. Quadruple or even quintuple woodwind are joined by eight horns and six or eight trumpets. Strauss handles his orchestra superbly, but the audience, when Strauss's orchestra was hard at work, cannot and is not expected to hear everything; details are lost in a marvellous sweep and wash of orchestral sound; melodies are often played in mixed colour by several different instruments; almost everything, especially melodies and important accompanimental figures, is doubled at the octave, or for two or three octaves; richness is all, and Strauss's orchestra is usually as rich as the best available fruit cake. These superb mixed colours are deployed in elaborate polyphony with all their doublings and the cushioning strings to support them, and the effect is that of a solid, iridescent, yielding block of sound, always sensuously beautiful, always involved in expressive melody but capable, with an inefficient or unsympathetic conductor of suggesting the efforts of a boneless creature to stand erect and walk purposefully. In properly sympathetic hands, Strauss's music, even when its themes and melodies are not the most impressive he invented, is sumptuous and moving. The love music of *Ein Heldenleben* and the *Sinfonia Domestica*, is overwhelming in its emotional power; men and women, we feel, are rarely so happy, so ecstatic as this, but they should be. And if the baby Strauss's bath, in the *Sinfonia Domestica*, suggests that its splashing are huger than tidal waves and its tantrums more destructive than cyclones, it is only the listener who cannot accept the idea of the mock heroic who grumbles. Others surrender happily to the rich, controlled sentimentalism which his crowded orchestration expresses at such moments.

The symphonic poems, which came to their mighty conclusion with the *Sinfonia Domestica*, led him to opera. *Salome* and *Elektra*, his first successful and mature operas, find time to indulge his passion for a rich soprano voice delivering great lyrical, ringing phrases, but escape the influence of his almost equal passion for luxurious string tone. Both operas are fierce, combining in a unique way a sense of decadence with a terrifying energy. Salome's Dance of the Seven Veils and her final, singularly horrific scene with the severed head of John the Baptist yield to the composer's passion (Viennese, though Strauss came from Munich), for a waltz in which strings, much divided, with first violins high in their register, dance with a passionate nostalgia; but the expression in these terms of Salome's perverted eroticism is dramatically compelling. Elektra's madness, a sort of obsessive blood lust, has no such appalling raptures and permits lyrical expressiveness only when Elektra, the down-trodden daughter of the murdered King Agamemnon, recog-

nizes her brother, come in disguise to avenge their father's death by killing their mother and her guilty lover, and in the jubilant dance of triumph with which she greets her brother's success.

Both operas are built from short themes and *motifs* in a way that suggests that the orchestra is making music by grinding themes harshly together. Neither is moderate in its demands for instruments, but the remorseless vigour with which Strauss uses the instruments precludes any of the rapturous sensuality which takes possession of the audience's mind during performances of his orchestral works and later operas. The energy of the music, which suggests that the instruments themselves are grinding the music into shape from the most basic raw materials gives the works an almost shocking mastery.

The *Salome* and *Elektra* style was brought into existence for only two works; *Der Rosenkavalier*, Strauss's gorgeous, sentimental social comedy produces the accustomed sumptuousness and the Straussian surrender to gorgeous string tone and the soprano voice. What might be called a love theme in *Der Rosenkavalier* is a tinkling chain of chords associated with the silver rose, the engagement token presented by the ardent, romantic adolescent hero to the adorably sweet, silly heroine on behalf of the husband her father has chosen for her, a gross, elderly, lecherous minor aristocrat. This love theme is not lyrical, but it appears always with great distinctness simply from its scoring for celeste, harp, high woodwind; it is obtrusive rather than amorous, perhaps because it remembers that the opera's two lovers are adolescents. But everything in *Der Rosenkavalier*—social observation, comedy, sentiment and boisterous farce—exists in the perspective created by a richly expressive string orchestra which, in addition to its moments of domination, supports the horns for which Strauss always wrote beautifully, the very active brass and the woodwind; the oboes too, are given a multitude of passages which must delight a player's heart, but everything in the score, and every instrument, is in place and treated with something like favouritism.

Strauss delighted, as his multiple doublings suggest, in complexity. Bruckner's huge unison climaxes, which are simply octave doublings by the entire orchestra over four or five octaves, are deliberate simplifications of complex textures; Strauss's doublings simply add to a richness which robs them of individuality. His virtuosity, in addition, makes him capable of trickeries which have led puritanical musicians to question his taste. Rossini once claimed that he could set any text, even a mere laundry list, to music. Strauss might equally well have claimed that he could imitate anything, turning any sort of sound into acceptable music and finding the musical equivalent of any action. The orchestra carries love

scenes, in *Don Juan* and the introduction of *Der Rosenkavalier*, to their unmistakable physical climax. The moments of the death of *Don Juan*, in a duel and of Don Quixote after his return to normality, are unmistakable. The orchestra of *Don Quixote* includes a wind machine for the scene in which the hero and his comic squire ride through the air, and muted horns imitate the sheep whom he mistakes for wizards; the windmill which he sees as a giant is not imitated but composed into a figure which suggests the ponderous movement of its sweeps. Only a sadly over-refined taste could fail to share the composer's pleasure in his ingenuity.

As an old man, Strauss simplified his style. His gargantuan orchestra slimmed itself, in his final works, almost to the proportions of a chamber orchestra in music as splendidly composed, as inventive in orchestration, as any of his earlier works but far more natural and neatly proportioned. The lovely *Four Last Songs* for soprano and orchestra, incredible as the work of a composer over eighty years old, echoes the true Straussian rapture and sensuality in simple terms but with no loss of emotional richness.

Post-Wagnerian composers were either consolidators or enlargers. The orchestra of Edward Elgar, a composer three years older than Mahler and seven years older than Strauss, is an orchestra of almost Straussian dimensions, though Elgar never demanded the massed brass of Strauss at his most grandiloquent; it is an orchestra created for richness as gorgeous as Strauss's, and often used as sumptuously. The amazing achievement it represents, even apart from the greatness of Elgar's power and originality, is that none of his English predecessors had a similar command of the modern orchestra, so that the skill of the *Enigma Variations* of 1899, its orchestral layout, its feeling for instrumental colour and its sureness in handling the orchestra had no precedent in recent English music; Elgar had, too, the tactical skill to deploy his forces in the most effective way.

The difference between Elgar's orchestra and Strauss's, however, is not simply the difference between Strauss's relationship to a great tradition and Elgar's English idiosyncrasy; the nerves of Elgar's music are nearer the skin. Even in his most sumptuous music there is a great nervous energy. Strauss's music relapses into delight at the rich sound in which it clothes itself, but even Elgar's most ebullient moments never rests; when it delights, it delights in its power of movement.

Often, at its most inventive, Elgar's music seems to express a troubled spirit. In *The Dream of Gerontius*, the dying man describes the approach of death as "this emptying out of each constituent and natural force by which I come to be", and the orchestra, in a short sequence of harmonies, empties itself of all colour and ani-

mation. It is, of course, the spacing of harmonies and the coalescing of instruments into a chord topped by an open octave which achieves this totally deadening effect and its sense of complete dereliction. The sense of 'emptying out', achieved by similar means, often 'empties out' the sense of joy in action, so that the passage in *The Dream of Gerontius* is almost a key-passage to the understanding of Elgar's emotions. Elgar's colours glow rather than shine or burn, and in some accustomed techniques seem to be over-used—very many climaxes grow out of rapid chromatic ascents from the trombones, an effect so natural to the composer that he uses it, transferred to cellos and double-basses, in the splendid *Introduction and Allegro for Strings*—his power survives them.

But Elgar's understanding of the orchestra is always complete; potentially awkward instruments, like the bass clarinet, are always given time to warm up unobtrusively, so that when their voice has to take the lead they can speak confidently and securely. In the great hymn of the angels, which Gerontius hears on his way to God's judgment hall, the glory is almost complete and the joy overwhelming until we remember Gerontius awaiting the moment of judgment as a low-lying clarinet climbs up a simply, questioning phrase; this is a part of the texture which many conductors seem not to regard as worthy of special attention, but given its place in the audience's consciousness by the slightest degree of emphasis, its effect is overwhelming. Percussion instruments mean less to Elgar than they did to Strauss or Mahler, and he never seems to have any special interest in experimenting with them.

According to Mahler, he and Strauss were tunnelling into a mountain from opposite sides and would eventually meet in the middle. At first, their sense of the orchestra at its grandest, their choice of themes and 'programmes' for their works and their loyalty to the doctrines of Wagner provided each of them with a starting point from which they diverged. Mahler's first big work, the first which he cared to acknowledge, *Das Klagen Lied*, was completed when he was twenty and revised in 1893 and again between 1898 and 1900, ready for a delayed first performance in 1901. It is scored for soprano, contralto and tenor soloists, a choir and large orchestra, all used with great effectiveness in what might be called a conventional post-Wagnerian style, though there are moments at which Mahler seems to seek out colour for its own sake. Professor Donald Mitchell, who has studied the unpublished original manuscript score of the work before its later revision, has pointed out that the revision moderates the adolescent composer's demands; possibly only devout Wagnerism persuaded young Mahler to demand six harps for *Das Klagen Lied*, for the revision, made when Mahler was a renowned conductor with a prob-

ably clearer sense of practicalities, is satisfied with two. The use of folk-song style melodies, which necessarily influence the style of orchestration, is an entirely un-Wagnerian influence, and it influences the scoring towards the woodwind. Mahler told his friend Natalie Bauer-Lechner (who earned the gratitude of all Mahler's admirers by piously reporting his conversation in detail) that his Bohemian background showed itself musically in the prominence of the upper woodwind in his scores, and in his love for their voices used in the most pungent, strong folk-music style.

Das Klagenle Lied tells in cantata style the folk-story of the elder brother who, for love of a Princess, murdered his younger brother. A wandering minstrel found one of the dead boy's bones, and from it made a flute. Played at the marriage of the Princess to the murderer, the flute played and sang the story of the murder. Mahler's score, as its original demand for harp shows, displayed a grand disdain for economy. The style of orchestration suggests the fundamental orchestral principles of Mahler's later works, but it rejoices in the vastness and power a large orchestra could supply. Amongst his demands in the cantata's final part is an offstage band—though the work is not designed to be staged and would prove unstageable, Mahler aimed at drama—of three bassoons, four flugelhorn, two cornets, timpani, triangle and cymbals; the final revision did not alter the numbers of the offstage band because Mahler as a conductor knew that there is a considerable difference between the effect of a dozen players playing loudly and heard from a distance and half a dozen instruments playing more softly from nearer at hand; for the sake of practicality, one supposes, he turned the flugelhorn and cornets into normal horns and trumpets; the purpose of the unusual instruments, like the purpose of the offstage band itself, is dramatic effectiveness—a wish to separate the music of jubilation from the doom-laden atmosphere of the story which mentions it; the offstage band is meant to allow the composer the freedom to rejoice in the context of a melodramatic tragedy. Typical of Mahler, too, is that fact that he writes for the part, penetrating E flat clarinet, an instrument which he was to use probably more frequently than any other composer.

Mahler completed his First Symphony in 1888, his Second in 1894 (after great difficulty in finding the right culmination and in bringing the work to an end) and he had begun to compose his Third Symphony before the Second was completed. The Third was finished in 1896. These three works in point of orchestration, are the most grandiloquent of his works, demanding huge orchestras with enlarged percussion sections and written at considerable length. The First Symphony has four movements only because a fifth, intermezzo-like movement was suppressed after some early

performances. The Second Symphony has five movements, one being a gorgeous song for contralto and the fifth requiring two soloists and choir. The Third has six movements, the second and third being intermezzo-like, the fourth another *Lied*, the fifth a setting of folk-song words for women's choir and boys' choir, and the sixth the slow movement. During the period in which he composed the three symphonies, he composed twelve songs for voice and orchestra, the words taken from the anthology of folk poetry, *Das Knaben Wunderhorn*, which provides ideas and references for the Second and Third Symphonies, both of which use poems from the anthology. The First Symphony refers to the earlier song cycle *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. One of the *Wunderhorn* songs, telling how Saint Antony of Padua preached to the fishes, who thought his sermon magnificent but behaved just as badly when they had heard it as they had done before, is expanded into the Scherzo of the Second Symphony.

Mahler had no special devotion to the strings orchestra, not even as a comfortable support for a solo voice in the songs; it is as though Mahler's orchestration takes nothing for granted in the orchestral tradition, and in the songs the orchestra is used selectively, so that whatever instrumental voices are heard are deliberately selected for the sake of their colour and tone; the human voice, he seems to believe, is always as reliable and self-sufficient as any orchestral instrument and can hold its own even when his strongly played woodwind parts set themselves to compete with it in dissonant counterpoints. The strings are simply yet another range of colours and effects, not the foundation of orchestral style. In the Second Symphony, long passages in the first movement occupy brass and woodwind with few important contributions from the strings. The huge first movement of the Third depends on wind tone, with the strings more or less reduced to adding a range of effects; the first movement of the grim Sixth Symphony, a vast symphonic march, is equally dominated by wind tone, the second subject, which is at first lyrical and exultant, is the one moment of glory for the strings. The result never, not even in *Das Klagenle Lied* and the First Symphony, coalesces into a great mass of gorgeous tone; Mahler's ideal from the first is an orchestra in which each contributing instrument makes us aware both of its thematic importance and of the colour it brings into the score, and when strings take the lead, it is because their voices and colour, often in Mahler yearning and emotional, is the right tone and colour for the passage. Mahler provided players with enormous difficulties of articulation and balance, but he never, after *Das Klagenle Lied*, wrote impracticably for them.

In the Second Symphony, as in the early cantata, Mahler added

an offstage band to an orchestra which already included six horns and four trumpets. The offstage band consists of four horns, four trumpets, triangle, cymbals, side-drum and timpani; the final bars add an organ. The effect, inevitably, is overpowering, but the purpose of the massive orchestra, however, is not Straussian complexity but clarity; however overwhelming the sound of the final climax it is scored so that whatever has to be heard as important and essential stands out of the mighty sound with complete clarity.

"All my orchestra sings," Mahler told the invaluable Natalie Bauer-Lechner. "For me, even the bassoon, even the bass tuba, even the timpani, should sing." This, in a sense, makes all Mahler's instruments functionally almost interchangeable; in the opening of the First Symphony, one of the most glorious of romantic dawns is greeted by a fanfare, which suggests that trumpets should play it in a perfectly conventional way; it rejects convention and is heard from the woodwind. The austere funeral march section of the first movement of the Ninth Symphony ends in a brief violin fanfare. But trumpets, if they are robbed of typical effects which have become clichés sing long, emotional melodies, though one of the hallmarks of Mahler's style is the use of horn calls as peremptory calls to action as well as making them mouthpieces for long, solemn melodies. In the first movement of the Third Symphony, where a solo trombone propels a great deal of the action, it is given phrases marked 'espressivo', 'sentimental', 'piano', in Mahler's customary odd mixture of German and Italian.

In spite of what look like Mahler's aggressive, block-busting tactics—the impression given by the elaborate lists of instruments which fill his scores—his writing is always both expert and extremely subtle. If a note has to be repeated, and the second has to be heard distinctly as a repeated note, the composer arranges for it to be heard separately, the second note coming from second violins, for example if the first has been delivered by first violins, or in the voice of an instrument quite differently coloured from that of the first. If notes are to be detached from each other, the detachment is marked not simply by a *staccato* sign (a dot over each detached note) but by a change of voices. Xylophone, glockenspiel and tubular bells bring their own colours to his scores, but the colour is really the secondary reason for their arrival, the primary reason is that their new and unmistakable colour ensures the clarity and distinctness of whatever they add. The harp is, normally, an instrument notable for its surges and splashes of colour; Mahler demands the plucking of its strings by a plectrum more often than most composers; the plectrum gives greater distinctness to the notes that are heard. In the last ecstasy of the Eighth Symphony, a passage which Mahler felt to be an inspired revelation, harps sweep

up and down long *arpeggios* in unison with the piano, so that the piano adds its clarity to the softer-edged wash of harp tone; Mahler's ideal was the maximum distinctness in scores where every note is functional and not simply employed to fill out the body of tone.

In the same way, his percussion is designed to play with a hard-edged definition. The Sixth Symphony, a vast, ultimately despairing work, wants dry-voiced side- and military drums and a whip, two flat pieces of wood which produce a dry, penetrating slap. Both it and the Seventh Symphony ask for cowbells, both 'deep' and 'high' sounding varieties are required though their pitch is not specified. Cowbells have a symbolic meaning to Mahler; they are the last earthly sounds to be heard by the mountaineer as he makes his way to exalted summits; they represent lonely exaltation of spirit above the confusion of everyday life.

In the finale of the Sixth Symphony, and nowhere else in his work, Mahler demands three loud strokes of a hammer upon a dull, unreverberant surface. The three hammer strokes, he said, are symbolic; they are the three blows of fate which would hit his hero, the human race, and the third of them "fells him like an ox". They are the three great punctuation marks of a movement in sonata form, marking the end of the major formal sections. Mahler seems never to have been satisfied with this effect, and he removed the third hammer stroke when he revised the work, though some conductors like to restore it.

Mahler's passion for clarity, which was at the heart of his fierce perfectionism as a conductor, was the prime motive of all his orchestral writing, and from the Fourth Symphony, in 1900, onward, it clearly dominated his idea of scoring. The Fourth Symphony is the only one of his works dominated by the strings, which seem to determine the course of the music in a way unlike any of his other symphonies. He described the Fourth as a work for small orchestra but although its score contains no parts for trombones or tuba, it demands xylophone and glockenspiel, and the clarinetists need instruments in B flat, A and E flat.

From the First Symphony onwards, Mahler had tended to work out much of the development of his music polyphonically, but the Fourth makes polyphony the entire essence of the work. There are no doublings, instruments do not run along together in octaves; later, Mahler seems to have decided that he disliked doublings so much that his performing editions of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Così fan Tutte* cancel out octave doublings with the flute deliciously playing an octave above violin melodies. The Fourth Symphony tends to discard every note which has no strictly functional purpose, achieving a great beauty of orchestral sound which

is often disturbing in its lack of subordinate tissue, where two or three instruments each play important thematic passages in counterpoint that inevitably accepts strong dissonances for the sake of polyphonic logic. There are passages in which three or four voices are heard, with no cushioning from subordinate harmonies, each part occupied with thematic material. (See Appendix 2, No. 9.) The colour of such passages is often marvellously bright and striking, but their beauty of colour is a secondary product of their musical logic, because they are coloured only so that every strand of the argument can be clearly heard. There are passages of remorselessly crowded scoring in his later symphonies, but they are pages of involved, crowded counterpoint, like the complex double fugue in the first movement of the Eighth Symphony, in which soloists, double choir and a huge orchestra are working out the implications of two themes, each of which produces phrases to be treated separately in the course of the music. What is written is never beautiful padding but is strictly functional. The Eighth Symphony, although it is almost the most demanding music we have in regard to its demand for an army of performers, has pages in the Second Part (it is written in two parts, the second telescoping slow movement, Scherzo and Finale) in which the score on the page has unusual bareness because one or two instruments are occupied with what is essential, and until they have said their say they are undisturbed except, perhaps, by a single supporting voice maintaining the tonality of the passage with an extended pedal note. It is as though Mahler wants his vast forces to appear as a huge chamber orchestra, with no instrument speaking except when it has something strictly necessary to say. The second movement of *Das Lied von der Erde* begins with an oboe playing a plaintive, extended melody which, as it continues, evolves new inflections and new turns of phrase against which the contralto sings a melody which, too, evolves with the minimum of repetition, but in quite different rhythms and inflections from those of the oboe. The last movement, *Der Abschied*, begins with an oboe playing a lonely wisp of melody over repeated gong strokes, each of which is left to die away; to give a sharper edge to each gong stroke, cellos and double-basses play a *pizzicato* note, reinforced by a quiet bass drum to give clarity of attack to the gong; into this, the contralto voice enters with an emotionally neutral recitative-like narration. The end of the work reaches an atmosphere of such rarified quiet stillness that the quiet jangling of a single mandoline adds a new colour to the murmuring of strings and the embroideries of a celeste.

Mahler did not achieve the ultimate in summoning massed forces to his service; that was the achievement of Schoenberg, in his

Gurrelieder, an early work which predates his revolutionary compositions and is, in point of fact, more conservative in style than Mahler's later music though Schoenberg became an ardent admirer of Mahler's work and a friend of Mahler himself. *Gurrelieder* not only requires solo singers, a speaker-narrator, a large choir and an expanded orchestra but also chains to rattle during a passage in its second part. The result, however, is never the bare, chamber orchestral textures which demanded that Mahler employed a vast orchestra for the sake of absolute precision and distinctness; it is as lush, as flatly scored and as padded as any music by Richard Strauss. It was the demand for clarity which led Mahler into excess, if the demand for instruments which make their voices heard only for a few bars in enormously extended works can be called excess. The novelty of Mahler's orchestration was responsible for his endless revision of his scores; the Fifth Symphony, for example, was worked over and revised every time he conducted it, and only the Ninth Symphony and *Das Lied von der Erde*, which he never heard, comes to us as a first version; every revision meant a greater sparseness of texture in the interests of unpadded clarity.

Mahler died at the age of fifty-one, so that it is hard to realize that much of his career coincided with that of Debussy, who was born in 1862 and was responsible for *Printemps*, his first big orchestral work after he had left the Paris Conservatoire in 1887, before Mahler had finished his First Symphony. Unlike Mahler, and any other composer who had grown up in the Central European tradition, Debussy had no particular interest in the idea of symphonic development, so that it is in a way surprising that Mahler was one of the first conductors to realize the novelty and importance of Debussy's orchestral works. Debussy's music vastly extended the vocabulary of modern harmony, and his orchestration rapidly solved the problem of developing the new style which was needed to exploit his new harmonic ideas. *Printemps* is a work we know in an orchestral version revised by Henri Blüsser, a teacher, composer and conductor eleven years younger than Debussy.

L'Après-Midi d'un Faune, a work of such originality that it still surprises listeners, was apparently begun some years before the composer reworked and completed it between 1892 and 1894. It is a translation into atmospheric, elusive music of an elusive, atmospheric poem by Mallarmé. It is afternoon, summer, the weather is hot, the faun is daydreaming in the sun and remembering; memories and daydreams pass through his mind; there is a great climax with the strings delivering a passionate-sounding melody in block harmonies; it has great power enhanced by the fact that most of the work suggests and hints rather than states forthrightly. The

music is beautiful, sensuous, erotic and intangible, and it turns the traditional technique of formal contrast into an art of surprise. It begins with an exotic-sounding melody from a solo flute; horns and a harp *glissando* join the flute, the strings creep into the texture unobtrusively; a *crescendo* passage suggests that some action is about to begin but the moment of action passes and all that is left is an unaccompanied clarinet too warm, it may be, and too contented, to bother about movement. The climax is not built up, it simply arrives, for this is part of a dream, and Debussy succeeds in finding shapely and organized music for the arbitrary processes of the dreaming mind. Not a single instrumental idea is doubtful or misjudged; if the form and 'meaning' of the work are elusive, its sound, and its progress from sound to sound, is both beautiful and organized.

Debussy's orchestra is not the multiple, many-voiced instrument of the Central European composers but a collection of individual timbres and colours to be used when required, not in blocks or in familiar combinations of colour but simply when each is required for the sake of its individual voice. Oboes offer sharp, acid comments, flutes flash brightly in their upper register or cling plaintively to emotional statements low in their compass; the clarinets bubble and gurgle in their low chalumeau register but indulge in elaborate arabesques and trills when they are taken into a high register. Trumpets and trombones, open or muted, are sometimes deliberately strident and forceful, but the horns are a race apart, luxurious and dreamy.

The strings provide an inventive, detailed underlay to this; there are few moments of Debussy's orchestral scores in which they are silent, and the underlay they provide is often amazingly detailed, involving *pizzicato* and bowed effects played simultaneously by divided violins, violas or cellos. In *La Mer*, the only one of his orchestral works which approaches symphonic design and balance, with something like a symphonic disposition of themes, approached elliptically and by implication rather than direct statement; there is a section in which the first violins are silent while the rest of the strings, all divided, play figurations which seem to turn into music the multiple sounds of the sea as waves fall and pour themselves away on a shingle beach; it is not description, it is not (like the bird song of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony) onomatopoeia; it is simply a conversion of natural sound into music. When Debussy designs a climax, the creation of atmosphere and the art of suggestion by which the climax is reached make its power and effectiveness enormous.

La Mer was written between 1902 and 1905, and it was followed by the set of three *Images*, composed between 1906 and 1912. It is

La Mer which remains Debussy's most explicit work. *Iberia*, the second of the *Images*, is masterly in its evocation of a hot Spanish night, of the burning sun, of a fiesta, but all these are conveyed by suggestion and the use of the Spanish rhythms and idioms by which French composers have always succeeded in writing convincing Spanish music. Idiomatic Spanish melodic phrases and rhythms, with an economical use of castanets, convey the rhythms of Spanish dance music. Always, in his orchestral music, Debussy exploits his art of implication and understatement, suggesting powers and passions we take for granted, creating an orchestral style which is completely unorthodox and completely convincing.