

MUSIC and MONUMENTALITY

*Commemoration and Wonderment
in Nineteenth-Century Germany*



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Descending to the Mütter

Consider the most enigmatic scene in Goethe's *Faust II*, the "descent to the Mothers." In order to extend his powers beyond the Christian world, Faust needs to travel to the mysterious realm of the *Mütter*—a realm that no one has entered before. The *Mütter* are, as Mephistopheles explains mysteriously, "the unexplorable, never to be explored, the unimplorable, never to be implored."¹ So inexplicable are the *Mütter* that no one can quite tell who they are or how to get to their realm: they dwell outside of time and space, in a wholly different dimension.² It is not even clear whether one should descend or ascend to them.³ Faust is simply instructed to stamp his foot on the ground and to disappear into the earth.⁴

The journey to the *Mütter* has long been recognized as a return into the womb and has been read as a primal scene, as it were, of Freudian ideas.⁵ The *Mütter* are not anyone's mother, but "mothers" in the plural and in the abstract: they are a formidable maternal force, the quintessence of the Eternal-Feminine.⁶ This awe-inspiring prospect, even hearing their name, terrifies Faust. He shudders—a perfectly appropriate response, which is at once a re-assertion of his human nature in the presence of the sublime and a physical response to the overwhelming super-personal emotional force that the *Mütter* embody.⁷ And he shudders with good reason: as Faust disappears into the earth, Mephistopheles wonders nonchalantly whether we shall ever see him again.⁸

As mothers, "goddesses"⁹ even, the *Mütter* are the mystical source of life, an unmediated *Ur*-existence; they are a force of pure instinctual creativity, an unreflected lived experience. They lead a primeval existence in an originary

chaos—“some will be seated, some will stand or walk, there is no rule”¹⁰—preceding any order, any laws, or indeed any words. This is why there is so little to be said about the *Mütter*: they remain forever outside of representation. Words simply fail them in every sense. Even when Faust successfully returns from his sojourn at the *Mütter*’s realm, all he can relate of his experiences are, by conventional standards, paradoxes: the “limitless” *Mütter* are both lonely and gregarious; they are surrounded by the images of life that are simultaneously “lively” and “without life.”¹¹ He can only stammer nonsense in his attempt to describe a realm where logic, words, and concepts, do not prevail. Nor can the *Mütter* see Faust. They can only see schematically, they “perceive wraiths.”¹² Nothing relating to them can be understood rationally, everything can only be intuited: yet what they have to offer is a deeper reality than our rational world—the *Mütter* have access to the Platonic idea itself.

The figure of Faust, of course, had long been seen as the quintessential “German character”—as early as 1918, Oswald Spengler announced the end of the Faustian Age along with the whole decline of the West.¹³ Perhaps more than other ideologies, however, musical literature and musical thought under the National Socialist regime was particularly beholden to this scene—the musical realm of the mothers came particularly to the fore in the 1930s and 1940s.¹⁴ When in 1944 Friedrich Blume declared in his attempt to define a German quality in music that the “realm of the *Mütter* is not to be decoded by a Faustian urge for knowledge,”¹⁵ he only summarized what had been a commonplace of interpretation over the previous ten or so years: the transcendent German quintessence—which had become a tireless quest of a National Socialist-inspired musicology¹⁶—or what, at any rate, passed for it, was not to be found by rational or scholarly means, in other words by conventional intellectualism. Instead, the academic traditions of their intellectual forefathers—the generation of Spitta, Adler, Jahn, and others—had to be overcome by reaching beyond their philological approach and delving into a realm of intuitions and deeper spiritual truths.¹⁷

Modern commentators sometimes rashly dismiss such irrational talk as wishy-washy and mystifying rhetoric, as it does not allow a handle on the subject at hand and seems to wallow in an indistinct instinctual “feeling,” which valorizes the subjectivity of the *Erlebnis* (or lived, unmediated experience) over reflection. But the very significance of irrationalism as an argumentative structure needs to be taken very seriously to understand this facet of German musical thought.¹⁸ Hans-Joachim Moser struck a similar tone at the end of his *Kleine deutsche Musikgeschichte* of 1938, whose peroration is a paean of the irrational in German music:

What we want in art is not the physical but the metaphysical, not the conveniently near but the distant idea, not clever awakensness but the childlike dream, not the dazzling dexterity of the nihilist show-off but the bitter seriousness of the ultimate meaning, even in the semblance of artistic play. . . . What we want (not just in Romanticism) is music as the expression of the humanly essential, as the representation of things in the center of feeling, as the festive presentation of a secret not expressible by other means; it may well be a lighthearted, smiling, happy secret, but a piece of spiritualism must be conveyed in it. And the urge to say that which is unsayable by words continuously guides the Germans toward instrumental music, as a language of communication with the spirit, and the spirits beyond that which is plainly communicable, as a sealing of symbols.¹⁹

Moser's dichotomous argumentative structure, typical of the time, does not shy away from polemical opposites that verge on the bizarre (would anyone opt for "the dazzling dexterity of the nihilist show-off"?). It is essentially an affirmation of the romantic metaphysics of absolute music with all its well-known, and by that time somewhat clichéd, attributes of articulating a truth that lies beyond words. In this sense, it might seem as if politically sanctioned musical thought of the 1930s did not progress much beyond the established traditions of nineteenth-century musical metaphysics.

Moser, it is true, builds on these traditional foundations, but it is easy to miss among Moser's well-worn stereotypes a surprisingly concrete conception of how to convey that which instrumental music has to say. Moser speaks of the "festive presentation" (*feiertägliche Bindung*)—or more literally, the "connections tied during or by means of holidays"—through which music's secret could be communicated.²⁰ In the broadest terms, the idea of such a "festive presentation" goes along with the unspoken ideology of absolute music, in the sense that it serves to lift its audiences beyond the everyday. The explicit functionalization of absolute music for celebratory purposes, however, would compromise its purposeless status.²¹ There is an irreconcilable conflict between the alleged deeper reality of the realm of the *Mütter*, representing the higher wordless truths of instrumental music, and the appropriation for *Fest-* and *Feiertage* with their social message. In other words, the very notion of the unspeakability of music was to be articulated in the service of the festive celebrations under the National Socialists.

This functionalization of absolute music in the service of awe makes it into "higher utility music" (or *böbere Gebrauchsmusik*), to alter Heinrich Besseler's

influential concept.²² In many ways, Hitler was right on the mark when he explained that there is nothing quite like the eternal language of great art to silence the narrow-minded complainer.²³ We should be mindful of the fine difference between the awe-struck quiet contemplation that monumentality encourages and the shutting-up of complainers, as practiced by the National Socialist regime. Yet we must ask to what extent musical monumentality was complicit in this. Or could, contrariwise, a critical exploration of musical monumentality help us uncover the unspeakable secret of musical festivals under the National Socialist regime?

A New Space for Music

The most far-reaching programmatic suggestions as to such a “festive” functional appropriation of music came from the corner of early music scholars. In these attempts, the concept of “musical space,” that is a space that music itself created in performance, not the performance space itself, was of paramount concern. Thus, in 1935, as we saw in chapter 1, Arnold Schering pondered the nature of musical monumentality, which he sought to exemplify in Bach and Handel.²⁴ “Magnitude” was the decisive criterion here—by which Schering meant not so much the duration of a piece during performance, but rather an imagined musical space that was articulated through its tonal structure:

A monumental piece of music can never be imagined in a restricted musical space. Its expanse is achieved by sounding a broad tonal basis, the predominance of simple and full harmonies and a certain splendor and fullness of sound. The imagination does not conceive of these effects as a mere reinforcement of the normal—far from it—instead, the sensual impression is completed toward a representation [*Vorstellung*] by unconsciously reproducing the acoustical space corresponding to these extraordinary sonic events.²⁵

Monumental music, in other words, would articulate and fill in vast imaginary tonal spaces. Ideally, these spaces would convey a sense of infinity and transcendence.²⁶ The key to this effect lay in the simplicity and clarity of the musical compositions—Schering suggested *cantus firmus* and *ostinato* techniques as well as fugal forms as exemplars of such clarity and simplicity. Fugal forms may seem like an odd choice, given their usual association with learnedness. All these techniques were linked, however, in that they were all supposed to convey a sense of a “single law” at work, an image which carried—at least since Kant—clear overtones of the sublime.²⁷



FIGURE 6.1 Albert Speer's "Cathedral of Light" (1937). Photo by Heinrich Hoffmann © Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.

It is difficult not to think of Albert Speer, Hitler's chief architect, and his idea of "light cathedrals" here. Using powerful floodlights against the night sky, which shone up their beams as vast colonnades of bright light, Speer created the illusion of overwhelmingly vast spaces that reached for the skies, as shown in figure 6.1. A favorite device for outdoors political rallies and cultural events, the "light cathedrals" enveloped and domed the sites of such important spectacles, and forged the participants into one community within this virtual space. Surrounded by such spectacular light effect, the individual crumbles against the overwhelming virtual space and turns, together with the other participants, into a mass ornament, an integral component blending into this utopian space.²⁸

Music was never far off from such effects. Propaganda events habitually included fanfares to surround the audience with sound from all sides, as a direct sonic equivalent of the light cathedral, a similarly politicized space.²⁹ A propaganda poster, "Land of Music," shown in figure 6.2, combined the idea of the light cathedral with organ pipes, evoking its majestic sounds by means of the image.³⁰ As the observer moves his or her gaze up along the organ pipes, they gradually turn into stylized feathers forming the mighty wings of an eagle, the symbolic animal of the Realm. Music, space, and nation are thus combined in this powerful emblem.

FIGURE 6.2
“Germany—Land of Music”
(1935). © Deutsches Historisches
Museum—Bildarchiv.



The musicologist Heinrich Bessler, known mainly for his groundbreaking research in medieval music, also voiced a number of ideas about musical space. Unlike Schering, however, he started from the concrete performance space of medieval and Renaissance music. For him, monumental music was based “not on the employment of massed forces, but on the musico-dramatic use of large spaces, the expansion of word and sound over a powerful order, transcending normal human dimensions.”³¹ In Bessler’s thinking, the nineteenth century typically constituted a negative pole; consequently, he set up his own concept of musical space in contrast to the idealized, internalized musical space that for him characterized nineteenth-century music. In early music, he argued, it was the performance space in which a genre emerged, that determined its musical features—such as polychoral effects or distant instrumental groups. Bessler called this, tantalizingly, its “living space” or *Lebensraum*.³²

This *Lebensraum* of early music, however, went beyond mere acoustical concerns: as the organic connotations of the term suggest, Bessler’s *Lebensraum* was inextricably bound up with the communal function of the musical traditions that emerge from and “live” in these musical spaces. Thus, he explained, to “transplant a genuine cult work such as a Bach cantata to the concert hall constitutes an intrusion into its original *Lebensraum*.”³³

Bessler was too shrewd a tactician not to be aware of the very topical political overtones of the term *Lebensraum*, and its blatant resonances with the aggressive expansionist politics of the regime.³⁴ He continued to describe his musical ecology of *Lebensraum*:

What matters is not the uniqueness and particularity of a single work, but the communal, lasting, connecting element of a whole group of internally related images. For the *Lebensraum* of music is not created by the individual or arbitrarily changed. It exists *before* the individual work of art and *before* the great creator, as the result of a growing process whose roots reach deeply into race, *Volk*, landscape, history, and communal forms of living.³⁵

Following Bessler's arguments, Schering's concept of the imaginary musical space would be exposed to the criticism that it is being essentially borne of the interiority of nineteenth-century symphonic aesthetics, which he imposed on the Baroque period of Bach and Handel. In his own conception, Bessler distinguished between the symphony as a "sounding cathedral" of interior space, and the church as the "space of cultish celebrations (irrespective of denominational differences)."³⁶ This addition, which accurately reflects National Socialist disdain for religious practice and ethics, but great interest in the ceremonial—"cultish"³⁷—aspect of it, seems to suggest that Bessler was himself not free from such anachronisms.

And in fact, Bessler's underlying interest in "music and space" was guided by a very contemporary concern for "the *Fest- und Fei ergestaltung* brought about by National Socialism"—and the "essential lived experience in contemporary life" (*das Grunderlebnis der Gegenwart*):

The popular and state festivals of the Third Reich, the 1st of May, the Harvest festival, the events of the Nuremberg Rallies, as well as the style of festivities in the formations, orders and communities of city and countryside—not to mention the lived experience itself, the design of a great open-air space, the new use of artistic and musical forces—create a new *Lebensraum* for music today.³⁸

In other words, Bessler's brand of monumental musical space was connected with the same social functions of music, in the service of festive, ceremonial, or modern cult rituals, that we already encountered in other aspects of National Socialist musical life.³⁹ Bessler knew, just as well as Schering and others, that art could be used to turn the masses into a nation.⁴⁰

Nowhere do Schering's explanations of musical monumentality assume the same explicitly political tone as Bessler's do, but similarly tendentious

undertones are clearly discernible. For Schering concluded that this imagined musical space of Baroque monumentality combines into an overall impression of “masculinity” that, in Schering’s view, characterized the Baroque period. Glorifying “that which is the best and noblest in man: virtue, spiritual greatness, strength, valor, courage, love, faithfulness,” he explained that the essential ethos of Baroque music was “severe and sturdy” [*berb und bart*].⁴¹ In this context, Bach and Handel are more difficult to place—especially given that Schering himself declared that the music of Bach and Handel was inclined to the “gentle, soft, submissively pliable” element.⁴²

Schering went on to explain that this “masculine” element of the Baroque goes hand in hand with the political system of absolutism: “This predominance of the masculine element—which, to the people, appeared to embody its highest perfection in the absolutist ruler—is connected with the fact that to the musician it did not matter whether he monumentalized divine or worldly majesty.”⁴³ Given that Schering had also dismissed Baroque pomp and powdered wigs as “false, overblown, and unnatural,” it seems that for a better understanding of Schering’s position here we should not so much look back to Louis XIV’s seventeenth century as to the absolutist rulers of Schering’s own age and their own masculine self-image. His reference to the people [*Volk*], especially, who are handled as the ultimate arbiters over both masculinity and the degree of perfection of their absolutist ruler, would rather seem to betray a very astute contemporary political sensitivity.

In many ways, Schering’s reinterpretation of Bach and Handel as masculine may seem more startling now than it would have been at the time. To a certain extent, Schering’s interpretation was simply following the signs of the time. Consider, for instance, the bust of Bach (1916), depicted in figure 6.3, that had been placed in the Walhalla at Regensburg, the German Hall of Fame, as an early example of a style that was to gain prominence in the later 1920s.⁴⁴ It is easy to detect in this bust a similar kind of “severe and stark”⁴⁵ masculine traits carved into Bach’s rather massive countenance that Schering associated with Baroque music. The bust exhibits simplified and cleanly articulated facial features: lips, nose, and forehead appear exaggerated. Bach’s characteristic wig is so stylized as almost to resemble a helmet. This austere image is rounded off by an imposing set of arched eyebrows. And, like Schering’s ideas, the bust bears a mere passing resemblance to pictorial representations dating from Bach’s time. Instead, the style of the bust foreshadows that strange mixture of archaisms and disdain for ornaments or detail that has come to characterize the fascist styles of the 1930s, and that aim, as has been argued at length, to invoke images of longevity and transcendence.⁴⁶ Indeed, the masculinist ideology behind Schering’s concept of Bachian monumentality here



FIGURE 6.3
Fritz Behn's bust of Johann Sebastian Bach (1916) at the Walhalla near Regensburg. Reproduced by permission of Walhalla-Verwaltung, Regensburg.

resonates well, as a musicological equivalent, with the sculptures of an Arno Breker or even the architecture of an Albert Speer.⁴⁷

Not surprisingly, then, Schering's model placed great emphasis on the approval of the masses, while mass appeal is in turn associated with the Baroque period:

Music enters more powerfully than ever before into the strata of the leading spirits of the nations; it conquers spheres [of listeners] of an educational standard that it would previously have only captured in exceptional cases. As its task consisted not only in satisfying connoisseurs but also amateurs of little education, even wholly unmusical ones, the average style had to be enhanced all the way to its greatest possible magnitude and force—that is: all the way to monumentality.⁴⁸

The social task of monumentality, of uniting and shaping the masses, is clearly articulated in Schering's model. Composers, by contrast, did not create monumental works in response to a social demand, he argued, but to follow an innate urge to monumentalize: Bach “shared an urge with Handel to monumentalize *compulsively*.”⁴⁹ In other words, Schering salvaged the Romantic idea of the inspired genius composer, who served an essentially classical view of the ethical purpose and function of art, dressed up in a distinctly modern and political guise.

This insistence on an indistinct urge to monumentalize then allowed Schering to declare the object of monumentalization as being of secondary importance: Schering explained that the standard Baroque practices of recycling—such as Bach’s self-borrowed cantatas, which habitually re-use profane ceremonial music in praise of divine authority—should by no means be taken as belittling of the heavenly majesty. Rather, he argued, monumentality in music is a more general phenomenon that does not simply apply to an individual person—human or divine—but rather to the “sum of the highest, super-individual characteristics, whose ethical significance remains the same, no matter on whom among mortals and immortals it is conferred.”⁵⁰ In line with the National Socialists’ rejection of religion while hanging on to the cult, rituals, and splendor thus decontextualized, this separation of monumental music from a specific honoree liberates transcendence as a purpose in its own right, which can then be transferred to fulfill other purposes.⁵¹ It is hard to see how exactly Schering’s argument could counter the charge of equivocating between heavenly and worldly rulers, but it could seem convincing in an intellectual context in which there is an even greater power than individuals divine or mortal.

Ultimately, in Schering’s model, as well as in Bessler’s musical *Lebensraum*, the spiritual substance of monumentality is provided by the nation. While Schering argued that the features of monumental music often build on religiously inspired materials—“Gregorian chant and protestant hymns, peculiar instrumental and thematic symbolisms, special contrapuntal-architectonic layout of the sound sources, room-acoustic effects etc.”⁵²—the communities that are shaped by and around monumental music follow strictly national lines. It is up to the composer, then, to capture the specificity of the national spirit and to monumentalize in a way befitting to the nation: “The only difference is that transcendence is found on a different level in each country.”⁵³ It remains unclear in Schering’s explanations how cosmopolitan composers fared abroad (Handel, for one, seems to be fully assimilated to the eudemonistic English spirit, while Gluck injected French music with a healthy dose of his German spirit).⁵⁴ But one thing is certain: Schering’s monumentality transcends almost everything—even God—but not nationhood.

It is obvious that in developing a model of monumentality around (ostensibly) Bach’s and Handel’s music, Schering was looking to include other kinds of music as well. In fact, he explained that “all monumental music that has been created up to now has to measure to the standards set by Baroque models.”⁵⁵ In other words, the “yearning for transcendence”⁵⁶ with which he summarized all monumental tendencies, also characterized his scholarly approach: it is less a stylistic analysis based on historical evidence than a set of guide-

lines; the values that Schering's Baroque period promoted transcend all subsequent stylistic periods and set binding standards for all eternity. Here again, any objections to the conflations and internal contradictions of the argument are brushed aside with reference to that deep, intuitive sense that cannot be approached with cold rationality: Schering concluded his argument by appealing to the "magical"⁵⁷ force of monumentality, contending that the mystery of monumentality "reveals itself solely to a feeling, discerning complete equilibrium of the parts, indubitable harmony of forces."⁵⁸ Meanwhile, propagandists knew that the situation was not quite as simple as Schering suggested: one could not simply rely on this indistinct "feeling," but, as we shall see, it had to be manipulated in the right way.

In this way, Bessler's and Schering's experiential conceptions of musical monumentality take us down the path into the non-rational world of the *Mütter* and play with the possibilities opened up in their alternative dimension: like the *Mütter*, the notions of musical space are "perceived wraiths"—the historical specificity of the material at hand is transformed into more general, transcendent programs, with particular relevance to their present time. We can speculate about the reasons that Schering and Bessler chose to clothe their ultimately systematic concerns in the language of historicism. One important factor is surely, first, that as music historians—and as sometime directors of the *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst* project (and its renamed National Socialist successor, *Das Erbe deutscher Musik*, which foregrounded the hereditary aspect of the project)—both Bessler and Schering had impeccable academic credentials.⁵⁹ Second, the cultural capital associated with the likes of Bach and Handel was such that they should serve as exemplary models, despite the obvious distortions that they had to suffer in the process. Third, while the musical traditions of the nineteenth century were undeniably central, the idealized relationship between music and society was thought to precede the bourgeois era. The sixteenth century, especially, served as the touchstone. Thus, Richard Strauss explained in his inaugural speech as director of the *Reichsmusikkammer* (Reich Music Chamber) that that age constituted the ideal synthesis, and a model, between artist and society.⁶⁰ (The sixteenth century, as Strauss imagined it, conspicuously resembled the utopian Nuremberg of Wagner's *Meistersinger*.) And fourth, considering the irrelevance of historical specificity, it appears that what matters is age per se: following Friedrich Blume's earlier argument and his insistence on unbroken national traditions, the rule of thumb seems to apply that the earlier a historical period, the more powerful the implications that the traditions are strong and worthy of preservation.⁶¹

Needless to say, Bessler and Schering diverge in many important respects. Bessler stressed the communal function of music, while Schering was more

interested in the musical textures that can produce monumental effects. Nor need we worry whether the core of this form of monumentality, the functional musical space, should be understood in the sense of Heideggerian *Dasein* (“being-in-the-world”), in keeping with Besseler’s intellectual lineage, or the Diltheyan *Erlebnis* (“lived experience”), which was more congenial to Schering’s hermeneutical leanings.⁶² What matters, rather, is to understand how both these attempts serve to use the unsayability topos of absolute music and refunctionalize it. While the appearance of historical research is maintained, what matters is not the accuracy of historical detail but rather the effect, the immediate experience, of the music. Schering summed it up: “So powerfully do the extraordinary, the super-normal features of its contents and the form of its representation seize us, that a long time after both have receded from our sight, not only does the elation continue in our soul but also our intellect is forced to continue pondering this experience [*das Erlebte*].”⁶³

The central concern of musical space is not with meaning but with presence. We do not find out anything about the subsequent intellectual reflection of this experience: it remains a void to be filled with political content. What both scholars propose is a fantastical, immaterial building of sound that allows us temporary access into an alternative, unthinkable dimension.

The Problem of Time

Such concepts of “musical space” could be applied no better to a later composer than to Anton Bruckner. As Bruckner scholar Mathias Hansen has pointed out, “no other musician, not even Wagner or Richard Strauss, indeed no other great artist of the past was occupied so unconditionally and completely by fascist ideology as Bruckner.”⁶⁴ What is more, Bruckner’s music was habitually attributed to the mentality of earlier periods. Thus, in 1934 the Bruckner specialist Robert Haas declared him effectively the heir of an earlier musical sense: “The medieval feeling for spaciousness [*Weiträumigkeit*], which was retained throughout the Baroque way of life and the Enlightenment . . . could fully vibrate in ecstatic hymns praising the glory of God and the world.”⁶⁵ Others, similarly, considered him the product of a “subterranean transmission of the South German-Austrian Baroque,” a “continuer, indeed the consummator of an age-old world of expression, that flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but was later swamped by other artistic currents, filled with powerful sensuality, love of brilliance, and a mighty richness of form drawn from ‘preclassical,’ appealingly ‘objective’ sense of form.”⁶⁶ The attempt to classify Bruckner as a Romantic composer—that is to say a figure of his

age—was resoundingly rejected, as his gigantic forms were felt to bear no relation to the formal miniatures of his Romantic contemporaries.⁶⁷

A favorite for triumphal occasions in this respect was Bruckner's Fifth symphony, whose fugal finale—with the famous final chorale apotheosis—constituted a compendium of monumental effects just as Schering described them for Bach and Handel. What is more, the practice of performing this finale with an additional brass ensemble, positioned at the back of the concert hall, to reinforce the final chorale would seem to be the epitome of a palpable musical space. It is no surprise that in the process of replacing these versions with the *Originalfassungen* or *Urfassungen*⁶⁸ during the 1930s, this performance tradition was only given up with considerable reluctance.⁶⁹ In Bruckner's symphonies, after all, the "sounding cathedral" of absolute music and the "space of cultish celebrations" of earlier musical practices finally came together.

Thus it was only a matter of time before Bruckner was going to be associated with the *Mütter*. Richard Strauss's successor in the *Reichsmusikkammer*, Peter Raabe, made this clear in his speech for the Regensburg Bruckner festival of 1937: "For those to whom the works reveal themselves, listening [to Bruckner] is not merely an artistic enjoyment: it is a descent to the mothers, to the sources of feeling, to which leads no thinking, no knowledge or searching, but only the will to be small before the infinitude of creation, and to be great in striving for the good."⁷⁰ It is difficult in this context not to think of the popular *Dunkelkonzerte*, in which Bruckner's music was played in fully darkened concert halls, enveloping the audiences in a cathedral of sound, as a musical return into the womb.⁷¹ Raabe's reading of the key scene describing Faust's encounter with the *Mütter*, with his strange emphasis on humility and goodness, may be a little eccentric among interpretations of *Faust*, but it shows the basic principle of individual insignificance in the presence of such overwhelming sounding bodies all the more clearly. He continued:

What he saw in those blissful hours of creation could not be conveyed by words. For it is precisely the tremendous part of absolute music, which places it above all the other arts—including dramatic music, including song, mass, oratorio—that it is their task to pronounce that which can be said neither in words nor in gestures. And if we were to try to pin down this mysterious power of symphonic art, it could only be in the words of Goethe's *chorus mysticus* {from the end of *Faust II*): 'the indescribable, here it is done.'⁷²

Bruckner's own lack of written commentary on his work was a rarity among composers in the later nineteenth century. Here the absence of words is turned

into the unsayability topos of absolute music. Like Faust, who could not express what he saw in the realm of the *Mütter*, Bruckner apparently kept silent about his music because wordlessness was the only adequate description for the ambition of his work. Bruckner's silence and his music, we are told, said more than words could say.

Werner Danckert, in picking up the same metaphor two years later, homed in particularly on the pre-Christian part of this image: "The Christian-Catholic element formed, so to speak, merely a transition to a life based on supreme antiquity, toward that primeval pagan emotional circle that venerates the eternal-feminine, the motherly, as the life-giving, the cosmic power itself."⁷³ In his attempt to push back the spiritual affinity of Bruckner's music to a pagan age before Christianity, he had to argue away the biographical and musical impact of Catholicism on Bruckner as a mere superficiality. He did so to endow Bruckner's music with an *ur-* quality, a raw primordial and sempiternal power, that was particularly associated with the philosophy of origins, and hence the *Mütter*. It might seem as if Dankert came unwittingly close to feminizing Bruckner. The gender discourses of National Socialism, however, predominantly excluded mothers from sexuality: their role was at once heroic and desexualized.⁷⁴

The philological activities that surrounded Bruckner and his *Urfassungen* during those years were fed from similar sources—a belief in the superiority of the originary utterance, which was seen as a guarantee for the primeval force of Bruckner's composition.⁷⁵ Thus Wilhelm Furtwängler argued:

For our knowledge of Bruckner's tonal language, Brucknerian will-to-style and feeling, the *Urfassungen* are exceptionally significant and instructive: the differences lie both in its instrumentation and in its tempo changes; with both it is the greater simplicity, unity, straightforwardness that characterizes the *Urfassung* and corresponds more closely to the spacious musical sensitivities of the Master.⁷⁶

Here the connections between the crucial simplicity of the *Urfassung* (which in Schering's sense would also mean that they possess greater monumentality) and the sense of spaciousness are forged most clearly. For the genuine *Lebensraum* of Bruckner's "symphonic cathedral," in other words, the *Urfassung* is indispensable. The Eighth Symphony is a case in point: Bruckner authorized Felix Weingartner in a famous letter to cut the finale of the Eighth: "It would be much too long and is valid only for a later age, and indeed only for a circle of friends and connoisseurs."⁷⁷ For the *Urfassungen* movement, this admission was crucial: this later age, the Golden Age for Bruckner, had finally begun.⁷⁸

Some authors, like Otto Schumann, brought a racial explanation for *Urfassungen* into play: the “Nordic” race (located in areas of Germany that conveniently coincided with the Protestant regions), austere and beholden to the whole, would consider the work with the view to preserving its integrity as a whole. By contrast, the South German and Austrian “Dinaric” race (who also were predominantly Catholic) was particularly in thrall to the splendor of the individual moment. The sensuous experience from moment to moment mattered most to them, just like Catholic mass—there could not be enough of those magical moments, their basic penchant was instinctually for long versions.⁷⁹ Not coincidentally, Schumann’s explanation of the sense-driven “Dinaric” outlook matches closely Schering’s concept of monumentality.

As philological exactitude was enlisted to bring about the authentic *Erlebnis*, other commentators were more emphatic in their demand for unadulterated—and uncut—versions of Bruckner’s works:

More drastic still than retouchings are cuts, for they tear up the formal unity and often render the developmental processes incomprehensible. . . . It is obvious how such interventions could disfigure the construction of whole movements, could render it unrecognizable. . . . We have been deprived of the originals; not only do we have the right, we have a veritable duty to demand them.⁸⁰

Indeed, the very lengths of Bruckner’s music seemed to be a feature that was particularly associated with its essentially German nature. Ernst Bücken, for one, argued that the miniature “temporality of Romanticism”⁸¹ could not be applied to Bruckner. Instead, he saw a direct correlation between the magnitude Bruckner’s monumental forms and the ascent of the German nation to greatness.⁸² And Karl Grunsky would go even further in a nationalistic diatribe: “For foreign audiences the length of Bruckner’s symphonies is hard to bear,” only to continue in an almost charming aside, which should strictly speaking cause his entire racist framework to collapse: “One can hardly claim, however, that every German could follow them without problems.”⁸³

This was precisely the crux with Bruckner. For all the emphatic nationalist rhetoric with which Bruckner and his spacious and expansive forms are appraised, and for all its propensity for “musical space,” the music really did not enjoy as much popular support as his proponents would have wished. In this, the lengths—and especially the greater lengths of the restored *Urfassungen*—proved the biggest stumbling block. Critics could well argue that the magnitude of Bruckner’s symphonies corresponded to the ascent of the German nation, but this did not mean much if the people who were to identify with

them were bored or put off by the sheer lengths of the symphonies. What had to happen was to find a way to make the nation *experience* the greatness of Bruckner. In this, philology could only go so far.

Bruckner's Popularity

It is here, at last, that the wordlessness of the *Mütter* has doubled up on the National Socialist appropriation of Bruckner and led into an impasse. On the one hand, the ideology of origins valued primordial truths—or, to use the pseudo-scientific parlance of the time, it recognized Bruckner's "chthonic-telluric"⁸⁴ elements (which can best be translated as "earthy-earthly"). On this basis, the *Urfassungen* were considered to provide a more authentic, and therefore more immediate, access to his musical creation. This, in turn, added to the valorization of the lengths of the symphonies, which were already considerable. More broadly, the imperative to honor his artistic integrity meant that only the totality of his symphonic creations—without cuts or alterations—could provide access to the spiritual depths his music conveyed wordlessly. In other words, the very dimensions of Bruckner's symphonies became an expression of their quintessential Germanness. On the other hand, however, the very same ideology of the *Mütter* also built on the immediacy of a "lived experience" that preceded—or defied—rational reflection and verbal description. The more *völkisch* interpretation of this ideology, therefore, demanded a uniform and unmediated, felt understanding of Bruckner's music, irrespective of prior education. And that was evidently not forthcoming.

When put in these more general terms, in fact, the problem of Bruckner falls squarely into wider debates about popularity and high culture that occupied National Socialist policy makers at all levels.⁸⁵ More than for other political movements, the task of bringing the values of high art in line with the appeal of popular art was imperative to the cultural politics of the National Socialist regime. On the one hand, the regime was eager to cultivate an image as defenders of culture in its battle to shake off its own image as philistines.⁸⁶ (A quick glance at newspaper reports of cultural events organized for the SS, in fact, should instantly remove any doubt: these events were, more often than not, crash courses in cultural literacy.⁸⁷) On the other hand, the populist anti-modernist polemics against elite and avant-garde art, which was typically denounced as "degenerate,"⁸⁸ insisted on the immediate communal relevance of art and advocated for a return to traditional values in art.⁸⁹ As Hitler himself explained in his speech opening the 1937 Great German Art Exhibition: "The artist not only creates for the artist. May he create,

like everybody else, for the people! And we will ensure that the people [*Volk*] will from now on be called upon to be the judge of his art.”⁹⁰

How exactly the two poles of high art and popular culture should be brought together was anyone’s guess.⁹¹ This question in fact became the topic of a long debate that was mainly carried out on the pages of *Die Musik*, the official musicological organ of the National Socialist regime.⁹² The bottom line, as was clear to everybody but was rarely explicitly acknowledged, was that “the cultural value of a kind of music does not always correspond to its utility value.”⁹³ Even the National Socialist mantra that the *Volk* was the ultimate arbiter in such matters did not help, as the crucial facet whether what mattered was what the *Volk* wanted, or what it *ought* to want, remained tantalizingly vague.

It was easy to mock this problem, as did the composer and music journalist Walter Abendroth in 1934:

Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Wagner, Bruckner are supposed to have created their works only for a small stratum of educated people? They are supposed to have expressed nothing but their individual emotions, which were of no consequence to the nation [*Volk*] among which they lived? . . . Even today—after 50, 60, 70, 100, and more years—a symphony by Bruckner or Brahms, a *Tristan*, a chamber music work by Beethoven, can only be truly enjoyed by “educated” people. Millions of others are left cold, they do not get anything out of it, do not even *want* to know about it. . . . At least, that’s what people say.⁹⁴

Against this mixture of idealism and faith in the artistic instincts of the people, other commentators put a more pessimistic (but still very ambitious) outlook:

As modernity progresses, it is advisable to pick up where the nation [*Volk*] really stands today. And if we are honest for once, this is at most at Wagner’s *Meistersinger*, not yet *Tristan* or Bruckner’s last symphonies, or Reger’s final works. Here it is necessary to prepare an inner comprehension of these latter works by means of good performances of simpler modern works, which can be conceived as preliminary steps to the greater ones.⁹⁵

It goes without saying that both commentators only consider works of the tonal tradition, which in most cases ends with Wagner and Bruckner, or exceptionally with Reger, Pfitzner, and Strauss. Some suggested, similarly, that composers orient themselves by the greatest composers of popular music, Schubert and Johann Strauss—the highest of the low, so to speak—to write music in a happy medium.⁹⁶

The idea of any form of lowering standards, however, whether it be as a preliminary step for the full enjoyment of more demanding works or as a way of marking up popular music, met with vigorous rejection in some quarters. The idea, for instance, of profaning Wagner by popularizing his works, was anathema to many.⁹⁷ And speaking for German radio programming, Kurt Herbst argued vigorously against any conflation of high and low. Using Beethoven as an example, he contends: “This is not about ‘Beethoven’ as a concept describing a person, but about Beethoven’s art and the Beethovenian capacity to capture a spiritual expressive potential in an immediate, i.e. stylistic tonal context.”⁹⁸ In this view, the German musical tradition is first and foremost cultural capital whose value must not be inflated with popular music. In other words, Beethoven should not so much be listened to as rather be appreciated reverently.

The values of popularity and those of culture are far from being identical. For Herbst, “popular” and “serious” music are both different forms of organizing time, both of which form necessary demands of the “natural feeling of the people” [*natürliches Volksempfinden*]: popular music is “lighthearted relief” [*beitere Auslösung*] and serious music “inner absorption” [*innere Sammlung*].⁹⁹ The attempt to conflate the two, Herbst argued, would be misguided, as the communal tasks of either genre is distinct.

The crucial category is that of entertainment. While it would be wrong to argue that one type of music was entertaining and the other was not, the different purposes of both kinds of art meant that both represent different types of entertainment:

In popular music the entertaining element is a necessary and purposeful component or, in other words, an essential stylistic feature of the musical object itself, while the entertaining element in art music or so-called serious music is merely incidental. Put differently: in serious music the entertaining element forms the experiential state of that listener who listens to this music appropriately and correctly, while in actual popular music the entertaining element belongs to the experience or (put more simply) to the musical object.¹⁰⁰

Herbst was at pains to avoid the word, or even the un-*völkisch* connotations, of elitist “intellectualism,” but that is precisely what he was talking about. The purpose of popular music was an experiential kind of entertainment, while the entertainment value of art music was more intellectual. This latter kind of entertainment was not so much located in its nature or structure as rather in the intellectual capacity and educational standard of its listeners. The specific difference, Herbst continued, is that popular music tends to be

well adapted to a specific non-musical purpose—it is functional, in short: *Gebrauchsmusik*.¹⁰¹ The implied opposite, the essence of serious art music, was the absolute nature and the emphatic work concept of Romantic music aesthetics.

Herbst, a cultural mandarin, fell short of offering any solutions: he advocated for the strict separation of popular and serious music, each with its own specific form of entertainment. However, Schering's model suggests that even monumentality was not fully without any function, since "it implies a form of purpose, namely that of the will-to-eternalize [*Verewigenwollen*]." ¹⁰² One important facet of Schering's model, therefore, is the double-edged relation to the tradition of absolute music: while it plays with the idea of the transcendence of canonical works, he also admits that this feature is itself a function. In fact, this connection offers a way to link both aspects of entertainment—the immediate, experiential form of popular music and the more rarefied cultural appeal of great art should come together in a celebration of transcendence.

The "Regensburg Bruckner Erlebnis"

Salvation came from the modern media, which over the previous decade had been able to gather experience with the very emotional force that National Socialist policy makers were at pains to channel and manipulate. The visual media, especially, had been able to hone music as a pure emotional tool:

Experience has taught us that only music is capable of both preparing a mood slowly and gradually, and of turning a mood into its opposite in the shortest time. Music may lose its acoustical value—as can already be gleaned from the fact that a large part [of the audiences] does not even notice the music, or at least the beginning of its acoustic effects. Their attention is drawn so strongly to the action, the moving image, that those people do not even manage also to pay attention to the—apparently incidental—music. But it is precisely this observation that shows most clearly the progress made in employing music for films: no longer does it work with the acoustic impression, but with the deeper spiritual impression.¹⁰³

The main Bruckner celebrations could not take place in 1936, the fortieth anniversary of his death, owing to the Olympic Games. But in the following year he was honored with a bust unveiled at Walhalla—the first and only such bust to be added to the German Hall of Fame in the twelve years of the "Thousand Year Realm."

This important event, a paragon of how the National Socialist organizers availed themselves of this monumental power of music and image, has been studied carefully by scholars such as Albrecht Dümling, Bryan Gilliam, Christa Brüstle, and others.¹⁰⁴ In building on and adding to the work of these scholars, we will revisit the 1937 Bruckner festival, to examine how exactly the *Erlebnis* of the monument, in which so much cultural capital had been invested, was choreographed.

The celebration was billed as a veritable “*Regensburger Bruckner-Erlebnis*,” as the title of the glowing report in *Zeitschrift für Musik* had it. (In 1933, in the spirit of the times, Schumann’s august journal had its epithet “*Neue*” removed.) In organizing this four-day festival of concerts and events relating to Bruckner, Joseph Goebbels had thought of everything—including hiring the entire Danube fleet, which were seen gliding up and down the river, to add to the overall impression.¹⁰⁵ Just how much these impressions were an integral part of the celebrations becomes clear in a passage in the official report, much-derided by subsequent commentators, where “even the decorated ships on the Danube stopped to listen to Goebbels’ speech.”¹⁰⁶ While it is unlikely that these remarkable details bear any relation to the actual events, it strongly suggests that the reporter was briefed about this feature, which otherwise might easily have gone unnoticed.

A similar facet in another news report corroborates that the press must have been supplied with highly detailed information about the event: the festivities ended with instrumental renditions of the *Deutschlandlied*, the *Horst-Wessel-Lied*, and the Austrian national anthem, as politically aligned Austrian papers were eager to report.¹⁰⁷ Since both anthems had identical melodies—a feature that was much discussed in the preparation for this event—it would have been impossible to tell them apart, had the reporter not been briefed accordingly.¹⁰⁸

The masses, carefully arranged outside the Walhalla, became an important ornament of the festivities. In Goebbels’s estimation, well over 3,000 participants and guests were expected (including 400 choral singers and 500 members of the Hitler Youth, 400 politicians, 700 guests of honor, 700 Austrian visitors).¹⁰⁹ On the whole, the plan for the festivities followed the tried-and-tested liturgy of National Socialist festivities.¹¹⁰ The most remarkable feature, however, is the meticulous timing of the event.¹¹¹ Beginning with military music in the open (11:00 A.M.), the *Führer* arrived and watched a military tattoo. The *Führer* would enter the colonnade of the Walhalla temple (11:02 A.M.), accompanied by fanfares of themes by Richard Wagner. The *Führer* having arrived at the speaker’s podium (11:04 A.M.), a massed chorus of local ensembles sang Bruckner’s patriotic *Germanenzug* for seven minutes.¹¹² The Bavarian

Ministerpräsident would make a short speech conferring the Walhalla to the care of the *Reich*. (11:11 A.M.). Starting at 11:19 A.M., Goebbels's own speech would go on for approximately fifteen minutes. Then the president of the *Brucknergesellschaft*, Max Auer, would award the *Führer* the Bruckner medal—an award introduced especially for this purpose—and was allotted a speaking time of one minute. (Goebbels' timing is less precise from here on, as he had made use of his organizer's privilege and not timed his own speech.)

The *Führer* would then enter Walhalla. Only few members of the government and the party, as well as the Austrian guests were admitted into the inner sanctuary for the actual consecration of the bust. As for the masses outside, only the musical program would tell of the act of consecration and the emotion inside. No sooner had the *Führer* entered the inside of Walhalla, than the Munich Philharmonic, directed by Siegmund von Hausegger, began to play what Goebbels called "the festive music" from the slow movement of Bruckner's Eighth symphony for a rather un-monumental two minutes. (The curious story, whereby this movement is supposed to represent the awakening of the "German Michel," may well have been an insider joke for the occasion, but it was not thematized during the festivities.¹¹³) The famous cathedral choir, the *Regensburger Domspatzen*, would then sing a three-minute a capella anthem, Bruckner's *Locus iste*.¹¹⁴ The *Führer* would proclaim: "I ask that the bust of the great German master Anton Bruckner be unveiled." ("Ich bitte, die Büste des großen deutschen Meisters Anton Bruckners zu enthüllen")—"or something to that effect," as Goebbels casually added in his notes. As the bust was unveiled, so-called "victory sounds" from Bruckner's Eighth Symphony were played for four minutes, while wreaths were laid down by the *Führer*, the Austrian government, the Bavarian state government, and the Bruckner Society. This moment is captured in figure 6.4. As the *Führer* left the hall, the obligatory *Deutschlandlied* and *Horst-Wessel-Lied* would be played, followed, as mentioned, by the Austrian anthem. While the *Führer* went to his car, fanfares from Bruckner's Fifth symphony were played.

The festivities follow a clear tripartite scheme. The two outer parts in front of the Walhalla temple both have a public, official character, dedicated as they are to speeches, exchanges of medals, and official emblems. They are musically framed by marches, fanfares, and a somewhat martial choral work by Bruckner. (The early and relatively little-known *Germanenzug* may have been chosen because of its patriotic—and non-Austrian—allusions, and also because it was Bruckner's first mature work, his "opus 1," as it were.) The cherished musical connection to Wagner is alluded to in the choice of fanfares at the beginning; Bruckner's music serves in the same function at the end of the ceremony, after his bust has been installed in Walhalla.



FIGURE 6.4 Adolf Hitler placing a wreath underneath Bruckner's bust in 1937.
© Ullstein Bilderdienst/Granger Collection.

The central part, inside Walhalla, is the sacred part of the ceremonial liturgy: the public is excluded here, and the spoken word is left behind—except for one moment: the unveiling of the bust. This is the first time that Hitler himself speaks. The filmed news clip of this inauguration ceremony makes this contrast even more explicit than the choreography of the event could have been: the eye of the camera enhances this transition by zooming in on the *Führer* as soon as he enters the inside of Walhalla, leaving not only the general public behind but also, visually, the chosen dignitaries who are in reality following him into the hall.

It is appropriate that this is the space for instrumental music—not only that, the selected pieces are taken from the grandest and most expansive of Bruckner's symphonic works. Unfortunately, Goebbels's notes do not indicate beyond the very general labels what passages they were, and the performance material is nonextant, but Siegmund von Hausegger's correspondence gives some indications. He wrote in a letter to the President of the International Bruckner Society, Max Auer:

When the veil falls off Bruckner's bust, triumphal Bruckner sounds must be played. The 'non confundar' from the Seventh would be appropriate, but it would not work musically. What would also work is the grandiose entry of the final theme of the Eighth in the recapitula-

tion, up to the C major chord with the cymbal crash, and from there jumping to the C major intensification near the end with the climax unifying all the themes, as a true Walhalla sound.¹¹⁵

Most interesting about this intriguing note is the reference to the cymbal crash that Hausegger makes: the single cymbal crash (2 measures before rehearsal figure Hh), which was included in all current editions at the time, is now considered inauthentic and has been removed from the critical edition of the score.¹¹⁶ Fidelity to Bruckner's music had to take a back seat behind the concision and emotional directness of Hausegger's arrangement.

Even though the score material of Hausegger's arrangement has been lost, we can catch a glimpse of it in the film material produced, in great haste, for the weekly news program.¹¹⁷ The short snippet of the music played in the inner sanctum of Walhalla is indeed taken from the slow movement, what we hear is taken from the repeat of the chorale-like part of the opening material (starting at measure 39).¹¹⁸ Unlike Bruckner's own version, however, with its calculated climactic use of three harps, Hausegger's arrangement adds ethereal harp sounds throughout the passage.¹¹⁹ In this sense, the reference to the cymbal crash in Hausegger's letter was programmatic: he was certainly aware of the affective power of instrumental timbres.

We can therefore reconstruct the soundtrack for this ceremonial act of inaugurating Bruckner into the German Hall of Fame. The labels "victory sounds" and "festive sounds" that are used in Goebbels's memo may suggest Wagnerian leitmotivic labels, but in this case the assigning of meaning to musical phrases is based on a semantics of emotion. The mysterious, otherworldly Adagio with its slow meandering, sonorous harmonies, provides a rich carpet of sound, and within it, it is particularly the incessant harp arpeggios that guide the listener into celestial spheres. The "festive sounds" lead the masses into the realm of the *Mütter*, even where they had to wait outside the Walhalla temple. This is music, as Nietzsche once wrote, to float in—music, as Bessler knew, that invited passive listening.¹²⁰

The finale, meanwhile, presents rousing fanfares with martial sequences, rising from the heavy low brass up to the piercing brass register. The sheer volume and brilliance of the brass sounds would surely be evocative all by itself, in the sense of wordlessly conveying victory, as Goebbels' informal label for this passage suggests, but Hausegger's note suggests an added, symbolic level of meaning for this musical choice, shown in example 6.1: the reference to the Wagnerian model—the texture of the Walhalla music at the end of *Rheingold*—is wittily related to the place in which the inauguration takes place. In the filmed version of the events, the eye of the camera anticipates and

EXAMPLE 6.1 The “Siegesklänge” (victory sounds) inside Walhalla sound the “Walhalla Motif” from the conclusion of Bruckner’s Eighth Symphony.

The image displays a page of a musical score for the 'Siegesklänge' (victory sounds) section of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony. The score is written for a full orchestra and is in the key of B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto' and the time signature is 3/4. The score begins at measure 759, indicated by a '759' above the first staff. The instruments listed on the left are: Flute I, II, III; Oboe I, II, III; Clarinet I, II in Bb; Clarinet III in Bb; Bassoon I, II, III; Horn I, II in F; Horn III, IV in Bb; Tenor Tuba I in Bb; Tenor Tuba II in Bb; Bass Tuba in F; Bass Tuba in F; Trumpet I in C; Trumpet II, III in C; Alto + Tenor Trombone; Bass Trombone; Contrabass Tuba; Timpani; Violin I; Violin II; Viola; Violoncello; and Double bass. The score features a variety of musical notations, including dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo) and *f* (forte), and articulation marks like accents and slurs. The woodwinds and brass sections play sustained notes and chords, while the strings play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The overall texture is dense and powerful, characteristic of Bruckner's style.

EXAMPLE 6.1 (continued)

763

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tba.

Tba.

B. Tb.

B. Tb.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Cb. Tb.

Timp.

Vin. I

Vin. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a symphony orchestra, labeled 'EXAMPLE 6.1 (continued)'. The page number '763' is in the top left. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout with staves for woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings. The woodwind section includes Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), two Clarinets (Cl.), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The brass section includes two Horns (Hn.), two Trumpets (Tpt.), two Trombones (Tbn.), and two Baritone Trombones/Contrabass Trombones (B. Tb./Cb. Tb.). The percussion section includes Timpani (Timp.). The string section includes Violin I (Vin. I), Violin II (Vin. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature (C). The music features various dynamics, articulations, and phrasing marks. The woodwinds and strings play sustained chords and moving lines, while the brass instruments play rhythmic patterns and sustained notes. The timpani play a steady, rhythmic accompaniment.

EXAMPLE 6.1 (continued)

767

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Hn.

Tba.

Tba.

B. Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Tpt.

Tpt.

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Cb. Tbn.

Timp.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a symphony orchestra, labeled 'EXAMPLE 6.1 (continued)' and starting at measure 767. The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature (C). The instruments listed on the left are: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), Horn (Hn.), Trombone (Tba.), Trombone (Tba.), Bass Trombone (B. Tbn.), Bass Trombone (B. Tbn.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Trumpet (Tpt.), Trombone (Tbn.), Bass Trombone (B. Tbn.), Contrabass Trombone (Cb. Tbn.), Timpani (Timp.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The Flute part begins with a melodic line in measure 767. The Oboe part has a long, sustained note. The Clarinets and Bassoon have rhythmic patterns. The Horns play sustained chords. The Trombones and Trumpets have rhythmic patterns. The Timpani plays a steady pulse. The Violins play a complex, rhythmic pattern. The Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass play sustained chords.

reduplicates this musical association by panning over a group of indistinct busts, then cutting to Wagner, and from there to Bruckner.¹²¹

It is in three ways, then, Bruckner's bust is grounded musically in Walhalla: emotionally with the "victorious" sounds of his arranged symphony, historically with the firm symbolic link to the Wagnerian model, and metaphorically by articulating the space of the Hall of Fame in music. For the participants in this quasi-religious act, as well as for the viewers of the filmed version in the cinemas, the musical and emotional tissues of the Regensburg Bruckner *Erlebnis* made for an inescapably awe-inspiring moment, one that cannot but reduce the individual to silence.

Bruckner Medial

Alongside Bruckner's festive entry into Walhalla, the few selected guests inside Walhalla and the countless viewers in the cinemas also witnessed his transformation into his own soundtrack. The choreography of the whole event is marked by a cinematographic aesthetic: the music is chosen to enhance and emotionally underscore the visual aspects of this state act. What is more, cuts and links are made not in line with musical concerns but in subservience to the visual choreography of the event. Goebbels had been able to learn much from important film events, above all *Triumph des Willens* (1934) and *Olympia* (filmed in 1936), and their masterful audio-visual interaction.¹²² All in all, the Bruckner experience was a meeting of modern administration with its immaculate timing and of the timeless mysticism of the *Mitter*. Even Schering knew that "the duration of a piece of music may well, but need not, be relevant for its monumental impression."¹²³

In his initial speech, Goebbels had just promised to subsidize the editions of *Urfassungen* handsomely.¹²⁴ His commitment to the unadulterated, purified, and lengthy versions of Bruckner's music, however, ended at the threshold of the hall. What mattered here was the immediacy of the enhanced and concentrated "lived experience," at a speed that was commensurate with the pace of modern life, as set by the modern media, and the ever-reducing attention spans of audiences.¹²⁵ Effectively, Bruckner was just a bystander at his own party. As Bryan Gilliam and others have persuasively argued, the political overtones of the "cultish" symbolism of the Bruckner festival can be read as preparation for the annexation of Austria that was to follow on the political level only a few months later.¹²⁶ That his biography was carefully stripped of references to Austria or to Catholicism in the process was clearly picked up by those parts of the Austrian press that were still politically independent.¹²⁷

The Catholic background of Bruckner's music—most clearly, perhaps, the “non confundar” motif from the *Te Deum* that became such an important part of his symphonies—was erased in favor of a wordless semantic void, an inarticulate sense of awe and wallowing in sounds.¹²⁸ Once replaced with the non-denominational cultish cathedral built of sounds, it could then quickly be refilled with a new significance to serve new ends. Is that the message of the *Mitter*? Is this what Faust's line of “the eternal entertainment of the eternal sense”¹²⁹ means?

To a certain extent we have to assume so. It is part and parcel of the wordlessness and absence of reason that is associated with their realm. Being lulled to silence also smothers any forms of protest. Sidestepping intellectual powers thus comes at a price: like Faust, we do not know whether the voyage to the *Mitter* will lead us upwards or downwards. Schering might well be correct that “there is an urge to serve the advanced education of mankind through art and with it to make it, if at all possible, more virtuous.”¹³⁰ But in the dimensionless and unfathomable realm of the mothers any standard of virtue is possible. The mothers, after all, can only see indistinctly and schematically, they only “perceive wraiths.” This is part of their strength and their weakness.

Let us not forget the underlying Freudian aspect of the descent to the *Mitter*—and one need not even be a Freudian to appreciate the sexual implications of this scene. As Faust knows well, the realm of the mothers is the most fundamental taboo of society, which he is prepared to breach.¹³¹ Nor are Faust's aims particularly laudable: he only descends to their realm to steal the source of their power—the glowing tripod, the tool that lends them the power to create images. In fact, the sexual symbolism of the scene is not subtle: Faust is given a small golden key by Mephistopheles, which grows and sparkles as soon as Faust seizes it. He is instructed to touch the tripod with his key; then it will be his.

No concern is more central to monumentality than the power of representation, the power to manipulate emotions. In this sense, scholars such as Schering and Bessler, Moser and Blume, who tried to get beyond conventional musicological wisdom by embracing unorthodox methodologies and unorthodox political opportunities, may have done so in order to gain clearer access to pure, unadulterated insights previously hidden by the limited dimensions of our (scholarly) perception. They aimed to get beyond the textual sources to the mystical—national and racial—sources of the lived experience of music itself. “Perceiving wraiths” may give rise to the hope that we can be in more immediate contact with the Platonic idea, but it also only allows for much less clear a view.