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Schumann's *Manfred* in the mental theatre

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Byron was determined from the start that *Manfred* should not be performed on stage. Writing from Venice in spring 1817 he told his publisher, John Murray, that:

> The thing I have sent you will see at a glimpse – could never be attempted or thought of for the stage . . . I composed it actually with a horror of the stage – with a view to render even the thought of it impracticable, knowing the zeal of my friends, that I should try that for which I have an invincible repugnance – viz. – a representation.[1]

And to his friend Douglas Kinnaird he described *Manfred* as follows:

> I have no tragedy or tragedies – but a sort of metaphysical drama which I sent to Murray the other day – which is the very Antipodes of the stage and is meant to be so – it is all in the Alps and the other world – and as mad as Bedlam – I do not even know it is fit for publication – the persons are all magicians – ghosts – and the evil principle – with a mixed mythology of my own – which you may suppose is somewhat of the strangest. – It has no pretense to being called a drama – except that it is dialogue and acts.[2]

There is a sense in which Byron's letters protest too much. The disingenuousness of his final words to Kinnaird – the admission that "it is dialogue and acts" – points to some conflict, on the poet's part, about *Manfred*'s theatrical potential. As David V. Erdmann has suggested, it might have been the case "that, far from considering his own plays unactable, Byron only feared they might be."[3] While Erdmann describes *Manfred* as a drama that makes no concessions to stage tastes – "a typical horror play . . . condensed . . . into one defiant soliloquy" – the poem's relationship to contemporary theatrical practice was more ambivalent.[4]

Byron's distaste for the theatre derived from feeling that a staged performance of the poem would limit its scope; his was a drama in and of the imagination, not bound by reality.[5] As will be apparent from the plot synopsis given below, despite its dialogue and act format, *Manfred* has very little action.[6] Instead, the protagonist's states of mind are externalized, and the text is dominated by lengthy monologues from its ruminating hero; rather like *Hamlet*, but without the final, murderous

[1] 9 March 1817, *"So Late into the Night": Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, vol. V (London, 1976), 185.
[2] 25 March 1817, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, 194–5.
[3] David V. Erdmann, "Byron's Stage Fright: The History of his Ambition and Fear of Writing for the Stage," in *The Plays of Lord Byron: Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Gleckner and Bernard Beatty (Liverpool, 1997), 6.
[4] Erdmann, 14.
[5] For such an argument, see Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1983), 170.
[6] See, Heinrich Theodor Rötscher, *Manfred; eine Tragödie von Lord Byron in ihrem innern zusammenhange entwickelt* (Bromberg, 1844), 11.

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release.[7] Moving quickly between contrasting imaginary landscapes (from the Alps to the other world) could not easily be done on stage, and realizing the spirit-characters with whom Manfred mostly communicates would have posed serious difficulties. There was also, of course, the scandal of *Manfred*: the assumption that the protagonist's lost beloved Astarte was a surrogate for Byron's half-sister Augusta Leigh, with whom he was guilty of incest. *Manfred* was written at the beginning of Byron's self-imposed exile following his scandalous divorce, when details of the affair were revealed.[8] If Astarte were associated in his mind with Augusta, it is likely that Byron would have preferred their communication to remain private, rather than proclaimed. Thus *Manfred* must not tread the boards of London or other European cities, but those of what he called "mental theatre."[9]

As Byron well knew, however, those elements that would "render even the thought of a staging impracticable" appeared very often in the theatre, and *Manfred* was staged throughout the nineteenth century, in England, Germany, and the United States. Alpine landscapes and spirit worlds were popular subjects for fashionable dioramas and panoramas: Astarte's phantasm became the centerpiece of productions. These visual phenomena were often joined by music; at times directed by Byron's text, but otherwise at the composer's behest. Perhaps paradoxically, it is at these moments of heightened visuality that music is called upon to lend its essential contribution to the theatrical experience. In this article I will explore music's potential role in Byron's mental theatre by examining two contrasting scores for *Manfred*. The first, Henry Bishop's for Covent Garden, will serve as a comparison for the second, Robert Schumann's famous Op. 115, which will be at the center of my attention. As I will argue, in Schumann's version music became a negotiating force between realistic and fantastic representation, between external and internal discourses, and between actual and mental theatre. At stake was the relative expressive capability of musical genres, the theatrical (here primarily melodrama) versus the instrumental or absolute, and ultimately music's representational potential. Before turning to theatre and music, however, a short summary of *Manfred*'s plot is necessary.

We are introduced to Count Manfred alone at midnight in his gothic study, bemoaning the futility of the pursuit of knowledge: "They who know the most / Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal Truth / The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life."[10] He invokes a visitation of spirits from whom he has but one desire: "forgetfulness." Without knowing what or whom he wishes to forget, the spirits

[7] From the opening monologue in the gothic study onwards, the obvious model is Goethe's *Faust*, Byron's indebtedness to which critics immediately picked up on. For an overview of the relationship between Byron's and Goethe's texts, see my "Euphorion Falls: Schumann, Manfred and Faust," Ph.D. diss. (Princeton, 2002), 6–42.

[8] See Benjamin Woolley, *The Bride of Science: Romance, Reason, and Byron's Daughter* (New York, 1999), 7–121.

[9] Byron, "Ravenna Journal, 1821," *"Born for Opposition": Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, vol. VIII (London, 1978), 186–7.

[10] All quotes from Byron's *Manfred* are from *The Complete Poetic Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, vol. IV (Oxford, 1986), 53–102.

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cannot help him; but one appears to him "in the shape of a beautiful female figure" and Manfred falls senseless to the ground. The source of his distress becomes clearer: the loss of his beloved, Astarte.

Standing on the cliffs of the *Jungfrau*, Manfred contemplates suicide, but is restrained by a passing chamois hunter who takes him to his cottage in the valley and attempts to dissuade him from ending his life. On taking his leave, Manfred once more begins to ascend the mountain. He summons the Witch of the Alps from a cataract:

> I read that thou wilt pardon to a Son
> Of Earth, whom the abstruser powers permit
> At times to commune with them – if that he
> Avail him of his spells – to call thee thus,
> And gaze on thee a moment.

Not convinced by Manfred's claim that he wants only to look upon her beauty, for "the face of the earth hath madden'd me," the Witch offers to grant him what is "in the power of the most powerful, / The rulers of the invisible." He responds by telling the Witch of Astarte, "like me in lineaments," whom he had loved and destroyed, "not with my hand, but heart." Manfred explains that to help him the Witch "must wake the Dead, or lay me low with them." She cannot do so without Manfred swearing obedience to her in return. He refuses. She departs.

As night falls Manfred climbs to the peak of the *Jungfrau*. The three Destinies and the spirit Nemesis are preparing for the arrival of their king, Arimanes. Manfred enters their Hall and persuades Arimanes to grant that his beloved, Astarte, be "uncharneled." Nemesis raises Astarte's phantom, which tells Manfred that "tomorrow ends thine earthly ills." He returns to his castle and, despite an Abbot's remonstrance, dies unrepentant.

The first theatrical performance of *Manfred* took place at Covent Garden on 29 October 1834, subtitled "A Choral Tragedy," with music by Henry Bishop. Performances continued until 23 December "in consequence of the continued overflows," and then into February of the following year, although at the end of its run it was given only as an afterpiece. As Byron had probably feared, the scenic elements of this *Manfred* attracted most audience attention. According to the playbill, "the Messrs. Grieve have exhibited some of the most beautiful specimens of their art; the *Jungfrau* Mountains, the Cataract of the Lower Alps, and a Terrace of Manfred's Castle are exquisite pictures, and the Hall of Arimanes, a copy of Martin's *Pandemonium*, was wonderfully grand."[11] Many critics were unwilling to endorse the production's emphasis on visual elements; despite praising the scenery's effectiveness, the *Covent Garden Courier* was skeptical:

> Granted with a view to the promotion of British dramatic literature, the theatres are used as mere painting rooms or receptacles for red fire. . . . The production of *Manfred* . . . rendered it . . . glaringly palpable. . . . *Manfred*, however fine as a poem, entirely wants . . . action. . . . There is only one character . . . and he has only to preserve a monotonous and

[11] Playbill for 29 October 1834. London, Theatre Museum, Enthoven Collection.

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abstracted course. How, then, has it been brought forward with any prospect of success? Why, thus: – Replete with the supernatural, it affords ample scope for pictorial display, for mechanical illusions.[12]

Problems with the production's emphasis on scenic effects were that they were passé, attempting to revive "that taste for scenic exhibitions which has confessedly declined"; popular, "an attractive bait to schoolboys"; and at times ridiculous: "We had a formidable display of ladies' legs, and of gentlemen devils in crimson indispensables. They were the most dandified demons we had ever beheld."[13] When *Manfred* was revived at Drury Lane thirty years later, the *Spectator* made clear that what drew the crowds was still "unquestionably the scenery."[14] In general this production was considered superior to the earlier one, thanks to Samuel Phelps's acting in the title role.[15] But maybe this was also because audiences were advised to harbor a different attitude: "*Manfred* . . . must not be looked upon as a play, but merely as a poem with panoramic illustrations . . . no visitor must expect the pleasure that is given by a stirring drama, and must be content instead with a succession of poetical tableau [*sic*]."[16]

An example of the London *Manfred*'s poetical tableaux was the lengthy first number, the "Scene of the Six Spirits," in which the appearance of each spirit was accompanied with a "symphony."[17] The second spirit "descends, in a mist"; the third spirit "appears, in a coral shell"; the fourth spirit "surrounded by blue flame"; the fifth "as the spirit of night"; and the sixth "as the back scene changes to an orrery, – with comet etc." Apparently during the second spirit's verse, "Mont Blanc is the monarch of Mountains," Mont Blanc was to be seen in the distance, and during the fourth spirit's "I am the Rider of the wind," the back scene was to open, depicting a storm at sea.

Another spectacular scene was the conjuration of the Witch of the Alps. According to Byron's poem, which the score quotes directly, Manfred "takes some water into the palm of his hand, and flings it into the air, muttering the adjuration. – After a pause, the Witch of the Alps rises, beneath the Arch of the sunbow of the torrent." Martin Meisel has pointed out that, although the Witch's beauty is visualized through Manfred's description, the imagery that colors and defines the scene shows it to be realizable through material illusion; her "hair of light" and "eyes of glory" become normal hyperbole in the company of such comparisons for her coloring as the sleeping infant's cheek, and "the rose tints" of twilight "upon the lofty glacier's virgin snow."[18] Thus the theatrical version can realize Byron's "stage" directions.

[12] Covent Garden Theatre, *Courier*, 30 October 1834.
[13] Covent Garden Theatre, *Time*, 30 October 1834, and *Courier* (n. 12).
[14] *Spectator*, 36 (17 October 1863), 2631.
[15] The Drury Lane production ran for sixty-three performances altogether. The production was repeated at the Princess's Theatre in 1873, and was described as "a very complete success." Dutton Cook, *Nights at the Play* (London, 1883), 199–202.
[16] Drury Lane, *Era*, 11 October 1863, 15.
[17] Bishop's autograph score reveals something of what was seen on stage; see *Manfred* (1834), London, British Library, Manuscript Add. 27727.
[18] Meisel, *Realizations* (n. 5), 170.

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Fig. 1 John Martin's *Manfred and the Witch of the Alps* © The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester.

The theatrical also filtered into illustrations and paintings of the poem executed in England soon after the Covent Garden productions. Meisel describes John Martin's *Manfred and the Witch of the Alps* (1837) as possibly having taken "more from the theatrical embodiments of the scene than it gave to them" (Fig. 1).[19] Comparing the painting with newspaper illustrations of the scene reveals their mutual indebtedness.[20] The interpretation of *Manfred* not as a "stirring drama," but as "a poem with panoramic illustrations," was provided for by Ford Madox Brown's *Manfred on the Jungfrau* (1840–61), in which the Count is about to be saved from jumping over the edge by the Chamois Hunter (Fig. 2).[21] Brown's Alpine landscape in itself was a form of mental theatre, a figment of his imagination, rather than drawn from experience. He commented: "The work is intended for consideration merely by the human and dramatic side, glaciers not having formed part of my scheme of study in those days," while it has been observed that "the vividly concentrated emotional relationship of the figures is still theatrical rather than realistic."[22]

[19] Meisel, 178.

[20] See "Scene from Manfred at Drury Lane Theatre: The Steinbach Waterfall, Haunt of the Witch of the Alps," *Illustrated London News*, 17 October 1863, 389.

[21] Manchester City Art Gallery, where Hunt's *Manfred* is housed, takes the poetical tableaux idea one step further. In the new Education Centre, children are given the chance to re-create the scene against a lifesized version of its snowy alpine backdrop (footholds and a safety bar preventing any from falling over the foot high precipice). They are encouraged to "STEP into the characters' shoes (STEP into Manfred's shoes, STEP into the Hunter's shoes) / COPY the expressions in the painting / COPY their poses." The children's exaggerated grimaces create excessively parodical *tableaux vivants*.

[22] See Martin Meisel, "Byron, Delacroix, Ford Madox Brown," *Studies in Romanticism*, 27 (1988), 581.

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Fig. 2: Ford Madox Brown, *Manfred on the Jungfrau* © Manchester City Art Gallery.

As mentioned, playbills referred to *Manfred* as a "choral tragedy," and as such music played a prominent part, furnishing almost every scene with symphonies, choruses and ballets (significantly, there is little descriptive music). While Henry Bishop's score was considered to have approximated "the style of Weber, bold, dramatic and highly imaginative," it was thought to show signs of being too hastily composed. Bishop was one of the most popular and successful composers for the English stage in the first half of the nineteenth century (now his fame rests on "Home! Sweet Home!"); as musical director for Covent Garden he, as he put it, "introduc[ed] into our theatres operas by Rossini and Mozart."[23] Mozart's operas were adapted to suit national tastes by translating them into English, streamlining their dramatic action and interpolating other numbers by various composers.[24] For *Manfred*, Bishop "borrowed" the Overture of Weber's *Euryanthe*.

The hybrid scores that Bishop created for Covent Garden and Drury Lane hint at the slight regard he and his collaborators held for the integrity of the works in hand. It comes as no surprise to find that the *Manfred* production at times radically alters Byron's text. This is most obvious in the final scene, which will be discussed later, but also in Act I, when a coven of witches are added who, with shades of

[23] Richard Northcott, *The Life of Sir Henry R. Bishop* (London, 1920), 33.
[24] On Bishop's Mozart adaptations, see Michael Fend, "Zur Rezeption von Mozarts Opern in London im fruhen 19. Jahrhundert," *Internationaler Musikwissenschaftlicher Kongress zum Mozartjahr 1991* (Baden-Wien, 1993), 601–14.

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Macbeth, perform a malediction on Manfred and then, following the conjuration of the Witch of the Alps, enjoy a carnival. The latter provides an excuse for a ballet (interrupted at one point by a thunderclap), with witches dancing on stage and seen in the distance, on the mountains. Their words – "the witches dance, the witches dance their round, merrily merrily merrily, cheerily cheerily . . ." – have nothing to do with Byron's poem.

Bishop died on 30 April 1856, nearly three months to the day before another composer of music for Byron's *Manfred*, Robert Schumann.[25] There is no evidence that Schumann knew Bishop's music, and Bishop died before Schumann's music for *Manfred* was performed in London. For the most part British producers remained loyal to Bishop's score. The 1863 Drury Lane production appropriated Schumann's overture, but used Bishop's incidental music.[26] A performance at Crystal Palace in 1874 was the first to use Schumann's incidental music.[27] This experiment was not repeated on stage until 1918, by the Incorporated Stage Society at Drury Lane on the 28 and 29 July when, as with Bishop's hybrid Mozart scores, Schumann's incidental music was supplemented by other of his compositions: according to *The Musical Times*, "the 'Album Leaves', the second of the two romances, and the 'Rhenish' Symphony provided entr'actes and a highly attractive ballet."[28]

In England, Byron's poem with Schumann's music was presented as a theatrical rendition, with one actor to a part. A different performance tradition came about in America, where the popular actor Edwin Booth established the practice of using Richard Pohl's abbreviated version of the text, and read the whole thing himself.[29] According to Ardelle Striker, in Germany two patterns developed: the first followed the Pohl format of the solo performer; the second used the English method or, as she calls it, "the less artistically demanding division of the roles among several voices."[30] Striker claims that Schumann's preference was for the former approach,

[25] Until Chaikovsky's *Manfred* Symphony, the only other version apart from Bishop's and Schumann's was Louis Trouillon Lacombe's "Manfred, a Dramatic Symphony in 5 Parts," presented at the Paris Conservatoire in 1847.

[26] Bishop's score was supplemented and partly recomposed by Drury Lane's music directors, Barnard and Randegger.

[27] Barry Weller, "The Stage History of Byron's Plays," *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller (Oxford, 1991), 579–96. On the Crystal Palace première, see Michael Musgrave, *The Musical Life of Crystal Palace* (Cambridge, 1995), 98. *The Musical Times* reports a performance of the incidental music by the London Musical Society in 1883, but without recitations: see *The Musical Times*, 24 (1883), 195.

[28] Anon., " 'Manfred' (Byron and Schumann) at Drury Lane Theatre," *The Musical Times*, 59 (1918), 424. Sir Thomas Beecham conducted, Courtenay Thorpe played Manfred, and Edith Evans played the Witch of the Alps and Nemesis.

[29] Booth's first "reading" took place on 8 May 1869 at a Philharmonic Society Concert; it was repeated on 26 May as an afternoon concert at Booth's Theatre, New York City. The first English performance in this manner took place at St George's Hall, London, in 1899, with Charles Fry as the reciter: see *The Musical Times*, 40 (1899), 473.

[30] The New York semi-weekly *Tribune* reported, "Schumann's music to *Manfred* has been performed at Darmstadt, not with the usual connecting text, but with the entire Byronic poem divided among the various *dramatis personae*." The most dedicated German advocate of rendering *Manfred* theatrically was King Ludwig II, who supported numerous productions in Munich: see Edward Hecht's "A Musician's Ramble on the Continent," *The Musical Times*,

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which she considers closer in conception to music drama than the English emphasis on spectacle.[31] In support of such a reading is the composer's insistence that the music for *Manfred* not be advertised to the public as opera, Singspiel, or melodrama, but as "ein dramatisches Gedicht mit Musik."[32] Other interpreters have tended to side with Striker, reading the work as "armchair drama," familiarized now through radio broadcasts.[33] But looking back at the work's inception, its première, and the score suggests that this was not necessarily the manner in which Schumann and his contemporaries envisioned his music being performed; that in many ways Schumann's *Manfred* was closer in spirit to the English theatrical version.

Schumann first read *Manfred* in 1829, and reread it in July 1848.[34] He adapted the poem for performance using Karl Adolf Suckow's translation, composed the Overture during the second half of October, and completed the incidental music during November.[35] Schumann's conception of the music for *Manfred* coincided with his finishing *Genoveva*: it seems unlikely that he could have turned from opera to a non-staged dramatic genre without some seepage between them. His many plans for operas in the late 1840s (including libretti based on Byron's *Sardanapalus* and *The Corsair*, Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*, August Bürck's *König Artus*, and Immermann's *Tristan und Isolde*) suggest that he was enthusiastic about the prospect of writing for the theatre.[36] Disappointment over the failure of *Genoveva*'s 1850 première – criticized mostly for its dramatic weaknesses – might have been mollified the following year by Liszt's proposal to stage *Manfred*.[37] At any rate, Schumann agreed to the project, despite some misgivings.

The most tantalizing information about Schumann's thoughts on a staged *Manfred* comes from Richard Pohl's reminiscences of the composer.[38] Pohl visited Schumann in Düsseldorf as he was preparing an abbreviated version of the text; they discussed the problems of performance.[39] Apparently Schumann was most

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16 (1875), 772; and Ardelle Striker, "*Manfred* in Concert: An American Premiere," *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 85 (1982), 479–88.

31 Striker, "*Manfred* in Concert" (n. 30).

32 Letter to Liszt, 5 November 1851, *Briefe, Neue Folge*, ed. F. Gustav Jansen (Leipzig, 1904), 350.

33 See, for example, Jochen Klement, "Lesedrama und Schauspielmusik: Zu Schumann's *Manfred* op. 115," *Schumann Studien*, 5 (1996), 143–52.

34 Robert Schumann, *Tagebücher, Band I: 1827–1838*, ed. Georg Eisman (Leipzig, 1971), 183.

35 Robert Schumann, *Tagebücher, Band III: Haushaltbücher*, ed. Gerd Nauhaus (Leipzig, 1982), 473–4.

36 See John Daverio, *Robert Schumann: "Herald of a New Poetic Age"* (Oxford, 1997), 303.

37 According to Hugo Riemann, Schumann's musico-dramatic ability shows itself without doubt in the *Manfred* music more fundamentally than he achieved in the opera *Genoveva*. *Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven (1800–1900)* (Berlin, 1901), 295.

38 Richard Pohl, "Erinnerungen an Robert Schumann, nebst angedruckten Briefen," *Deutsche Revue*, 2 (1878), 169, 306. Translated by John Michael Cooper as "Reminiscences of Robert Schumann (1878)" in *Schumann and his World*, ed. R. Larry Todd (Princeton, 1994), 233–67, 246.

39 As Daverio discusses, Schumann's abbreviated version was not much shorter than the original. Pohl produced a concert arrangement of *Manfred* after Schumann's death, published by Breitkopf und Härtel in 1858; this was the version adopted by performers in the United States.

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concerned about the scenery, particularly the appearance of the ghosts of the elements. Byron's description – "a star is seen at the darker end of the gallery; it is stationary; and a voice is heard singing" – hardly encourages giving the spirits bodily forms, and Schumann was worried that they would always appear "too concrete."[40] Nevertheless, in a letter to Liszt, he maintained that "the appearance of the spirits must naturally be given representation." Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski reports Schumann as having said: "I wish I could see the whole thing staged with music; but it calls for the best forces. I have the intention therefore of paying a visit to the King of Prussia at some later point, to see if perhaps a performance with music on the Berlin stage would be possible."[41]

Schumann's openness toward the appearance of spirits possibly lay in his choice of translation. His preference for Karl Adolf Suckow's version is most often credited to his discriminating ear for poetry, but I would like to suggest another reason.[42] Contrary to almost every other commentator on *Manfred*, in his hundred-page preface to his translation, Suckow argues at length that the poem is inherently theatrical, even going so far as to say that through its performance German theatre might be restored to its former glory, a goal to which Schumann surely aspired.[43] Suckow was a professor of theology and in his essay on *Manfred* he admits that he is neither a musician nor a man of the theatre, but his enthusiasm for the project – which he admits is eccentric ("überspannt") – quite disarmingly spills over.[44] He imagines musical accompaniment throughout and describes each number, including how it should be staged and even describing the nature of the overture. Although leaving scope for the designer, he suggests many details, often concerned with the convincing portrayal of the supernatural. These recommendations do not always match Schumann's score, but their similarities and differences illuminate the possibilities both men considered.

For example, Suckow did not think the spirits of the elements in Act I should be given physical form, but should only be heard.[45] The incantation scene was to be arranged with either a blackout or a ballet of spirits as the lines were spoken.[46]

[40] Pohl suggested as a solution to the staging of the spirits the manner in which the actor Eduard Devrient had recently presented Faust's Dream at the Dresden Hoftheater, with misty scenes merging into one another.

[41] Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewksi, *Robert Schumann: Eine Biographie* (Leipzig, 1906), 402.

[42] On the merits of Suckow's translation, see Luisa Zanoncelli, "Von Byron zu Schumann oder die Metamorphose des *Manfred*," *Musik-Konzepte Sonderband: Robert Schumann* (Munich, 1981), 130–1. Adolf Böttger (1815–70) had also produced a version of *Manfred*. Having translated Byron, Pope, Goldsmith, Milton, and Ossian, as well as Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* (not to mention his having prepared the text for Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*), Böttger was the more experienced, well-known and obvious choice.

[43] Karl Adolf Suckow (pseud. Posgaru), *Byron's "Manfred." Einleitung, Besetzung und Anmerkungen. Ein Beitrag zur Kritik der gegenwärtigen deutschen dramatischen Kunst und Poesie* (Breslau, 1839), 85–6, 91.

[44] Suckow, *Byron's "Manfred"* (n. 43), 91. Eduard Hanslick disparaged Schumann's theatrical interpretation of *Manfred*, commenting "wie echt deutsch unpraktisch!" See his "*Manfred* von Robert Schumann," *Aus dem Concert-Saal: Kritiken und Schilderungen aus 20 Jahren des Wiener Musiklebens 1848–1868* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1897), 192.

[45] Suckow, *Byron's "Manfred"* (n. 43), 44–5.

[46] Suckow, 49–50.

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During the blackout the scene was to be shifted. When the lights are turned on again, Manfred should be revealed in the Alps.[47] Nemesis paves the way into the hall of Arimanes while the scenery changes, the whole episode to be accompanied by music. The hymn of Arimanes is described in detail, as a kind of chorale, splicing signifiers of the pious with the demonic: "It is Hell's religiosity" ("[es ist] ein Frömmigkeit der Hölle").[48] Astarte's appearance, according to Suckow, should bring a poetic holiness to the stage, saving theatre from the frivolous meaninglessness of modern dramatic poetry.[49] His view that Astarte should not be a bare mist shape ("ein bloßes Dunstgebilde") but possess a certain reality resonates with Schumann's determination that the spirits be given physical form.[50] Should all this be put into effect, Suckow confidently states, *Manfred* will be a great theatrical success.

Manfred was performed at the Hoftheater in Weimar on 13 June 1852, conducted by Liszt, with Ernst Possart in the title role. Schumann was unable to attend because of illness. Liszt wrote to him:

> You would not have been discontented with the way in which, musically speaking, we prepared and performed this work, which I regard as one of your most genuinely successful. The whole impression was, as I had expected, a thoroughly noble, profound, and elevating one. The part of Manfred was taken by Herr Pötsch [*sic*], and rendered with an understanding that did him honour. As far as the staging is concerned, one or two things could be said; but it would be unjust for our debt to the producer, Herr Genast, not to be acknowledged.[51]

Liszt further recommended that Schumann write to thank Genast and the actors, and also that he lengthen the music introducing the Chorus of Arimanes. The remaining correspondence between Schumann and Liszt regarding *Manfred* is confined to a squabble about the manuscript, which Clara demanded be returned, to Liszt's disgruntlement.[52]

Little evidence remains of this first performance.[53] With the exception of Liszt's letter, all extant references to its performance date from its preparation. Liszt mentions the forthcoming première in letters to Carl Alexander, Richard Wagner and to the Capellmeister Gustav Schmidt.[54] His protégé Hans von Bülow, recently

[47] Suckow, 50.
[48] Suckow, 57.
[49] Suckow, 60.
[50] Suckow, 58.
[51] Letter to Schumann, 26 June 1852, in Franz Liszt, *Selected Letters*, trans. and ed. Adrian Williams (Oxford, 1998), 326–7.
[52] Letter to Clara Schumann, 11 September 1852, *Franz Liszt's Briefe*, ed. La Mara (Leipzig, 1893), 333.
[53] Paul Graf Waldersee refers to this first performance and mentions that he had heard of others in Munich, Vienna, Berlin, and Hamburg. See his "Robert Schumann's *Manfred*," *Sammlung musikalische Vorträge*, 13 (1879), 9.
[54] All of Liszt's references to *Manfred* are asides: he invites Carl Alexander to the première in a postscript; he mentions it to Wagner while reciting the upcoming season (which included Spohr's *Faust* with new recitatives); and to Schmidt Liszt describes *Manfred* as taking place a day later than *Tannhäuser* (which was covered extensively). Letter of 14 January 1852,

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arrived in Weimar, mentions the event – and *Manfred*'s second performance on 17 June – to his father, his sister, and to Theodor Uhlig.[55] ''Maybe you will run over for the performance," Bülow wrote Uhlig. But it seems as if he did not and, apparently, neither did anyone else. Many of Schumann's friends and supporters were out of town: Joachim went to London at the end of May and did not return to Weimar until the end of August; Liszt himself went to the musical festival at Ballenstadt soon after the performances, perhaps relaxing pressure on resident critics to cover his latest venture.[56]

The only critical article concerning the *Manfred* première is curiously passive; on 26 June 1852 the *Weimarische Zeitung* reprinted a piece about Byron's poem from 6 November 1827. In a footnote the editor explained: ''The following appraisal has been made available to us from the unpublished works of Herrn. Geh. Hofrath Riemer. It may presently be of double interest given the recent successful performance of *Manfred* on our stage."[57] The performance is endorsed but at a distance, both authorial and, in a way, temporal. In choosing to use unpublished material a quarter-century old, were the editors implying that there was nothing new to be said of Byron's poem? Was it considered out-of-date or were reviewers simply out of town? The only document pertaining to the première, Riemer's comments reveal next to nothing. This lack of concrete information in some ways neatly ironizes Byron's idea of mental theatre; Schumann's vision can indeed only be imagined. Philipp Spitta described the work as homeless (''heimatlos"), belonging neither on stage, where the poem loses its ''fantastic *unheimlich* magic" (''ihres phantastisch unheimlichen Zaubers") nor in the concert hall: it could best be performed, he concluded, silently, by reading the score.[58]

A silent reading of Schumann's score is thwarted by its obvious references to and dependence on established types of dramatic and theatrical musical genres; characters are encouraged to sing and speak aloud. Spirits sing, but their music is not so defamiliarizing as we might expect of the supernatural: the spirits' choruses sound not dissimilar to Bach's turbae (for example, numbers 8 and 9, ''Wirf in den Staub dich," and ''Zermalmt den Wurm") or Handel's dramatic part-writing (the

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Briefwechsel zwischen Franz Liszt und Carl Alexander, Grossherzog von Sachsen, ed. La Mara (Leipzig, 1909), 33; letter of April 1852, *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt*, trans. Francis Hueffer, rev. William Ashton Ellis, vol. I (New York, 1973), 202; letter of 18 May 1852, *Franz Liszt's Briefe* (n. 52), 109.

[55] Letters of 21 January, 14 June, and 22 April. Hans von Bülow, *Briefe und Schriften*, ed. Marie von Bülow, vol. I (Leipzig, 1899), 413, 448, 435.

[56] Liszt later wrote: ''Although he conceived his music to Byron's *Manfred* for the theatre, in which form it was presented only in Weimar, this work will still find attentive audiences in the concert hall and justifiably should be performed with Schumann's other works that enrich our concert programmes." ''Robert Schumann (1855)," trans. R. Larry Todd, *Schumann and his World* (n. 38), 350. The concert première of *Manfred* took place in Leipzig, 24 March 1859; Philipp Spitta, *Ein Lebensbild Robert Schumann's* (Leipzig, 1882), 44.

[57] *Weimarische Zeitung*, 26 June 1852, 51, 535.

[58] Spitta, *Ein Lebensbild Robert Schumann's* (n. 56), 96. I retain the German *unheimlich*, as the typical post-Freud translation of ''uncanny" seems too loaded.

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imitation in the ''Hymnus der Geister Ariman's" recalls ''Cherub and Seraphim, unbodied forms" from *Jeptha*, supplemented by some devilish woodwind shrieks straight out of nineteenth-century ''horror" opera, perhaps like Suckow's religiosity of hell). The stranger music comes with the principal supernatural characters (The Witch of the Alps, Arimanes, Nemesis, Astarte), who speak over melodramatic musical accompaniment. That melodrama also accompanies Manfred, the Chamois Hunter and the Abbot blurs the definition between otherworldly and mortal musics and modes of discourse.[59] As these passages are also those most directly involved with the theatrical, they highlight the ambiguous musico-dramatic status of the melodramas. Since the representational potential of music is most hotly contested in these moments, it is to them that I now turn.

The coupling of spoken declamation and musical accompaniment is an inherently theatrical gesture.[60] More specifically, on the German operatic stage melodrama was often associated with an excess of visual stimuli – most obviously in the moonlit midnight scenes of ''horror" operas such as Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Marschner's *Der Vampyr* and *Hans Heiling* or, in negative terms, the gloom of the dungeon scene in Beethoven's *Fidelio*.[61] Visual excess also marks the melodramatic scenes in *Manfred*: from the appearance of the beautiful figure, to the Alps and their Witch, to the invocation of Astarte. It is in these scenes that the friction with Byron's non-staged conception increases. For example, *ranz des vaches*, or *Alpenkuhreigen*, were an indispensable part of the nineteenth-century conception of the Alps, particularly in dioramic and panoramic representations, which often accompanied their spectacular scenic effects with suitable music and changing light effects such as sunrises.[62] In an attempt to make its effect as phantasmagoric as possible, the Alpine panorama did not include any human forms. The scenery of Byron's poem, however, is experienced through Manfred's eyes and his moribund view of the world. When, at sunrise, he stands alone on the cliffs of the *Jungfrau* to contemplate Nature's beauty he finds it does not move him. Such pessimistic solipsism precludes his sharing the experience; his subjective vision prevents its theatrical presentation.

Manfred does not want to be part of this physical realm: he wishes to be ''viewless," like the tones of the shepherd's pipe heard from the valley:

> My soul would drink those echoes. – Oh, that I were
> The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
> A living voice, a breathing harmony,

[59] Elizabeth Paley considers melodrama in Schumann's *Manfred* to signify ''spiritual autonomy. . . . In the musical settings, the demons over whom Manfred holds sway sing; only Manfred himself, along with the mightiest rulers, speaks." '' 'The Voice Which Was My Music': Narrative and Nonnarrative Musical Discourse in Schumann's *Manfred*," *19th-Century Music*, 24 (2000), 4.

[60] On the parallel French tradition of *mélodrame*, see Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, 1976).

[61] Anselm Gerhard describes melodrama in French opera as a manifestation of visual culture; see *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago, 1998), 160.

[62] See Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (New York, 1997), 77–9; and Jonathan Crary, ''Géricault, the Panorama, and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Grey Room*, 9 (2002), 5–25.

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A bodiless enjoyment – born and dying
With the blest tone which made me!

Music, in the simple, ''pure,'' instrumental form of a lone piper, becomes for Manfred a symbol of life and death. On the one hand, music is associated with humanity and redemption: Manfred hearing the shepherd's pipe seems to forecast his being saved from suicide by a passing hunter; in Schumann's version, another woodwind melody will seem to save the dying Manfred from hell. On the other hand, music is a cipher for mortality: it is as transient as breath. That music is invisible or ''viewless,'' and that it is this quality that Manfred most yearns after, connects music – particularly, in this instance, instrumental music – with subjective, internalized expression. Manfred and music communicate through inner voices, which will infiltrate and unsettle more external, theatrical modes of discourse.
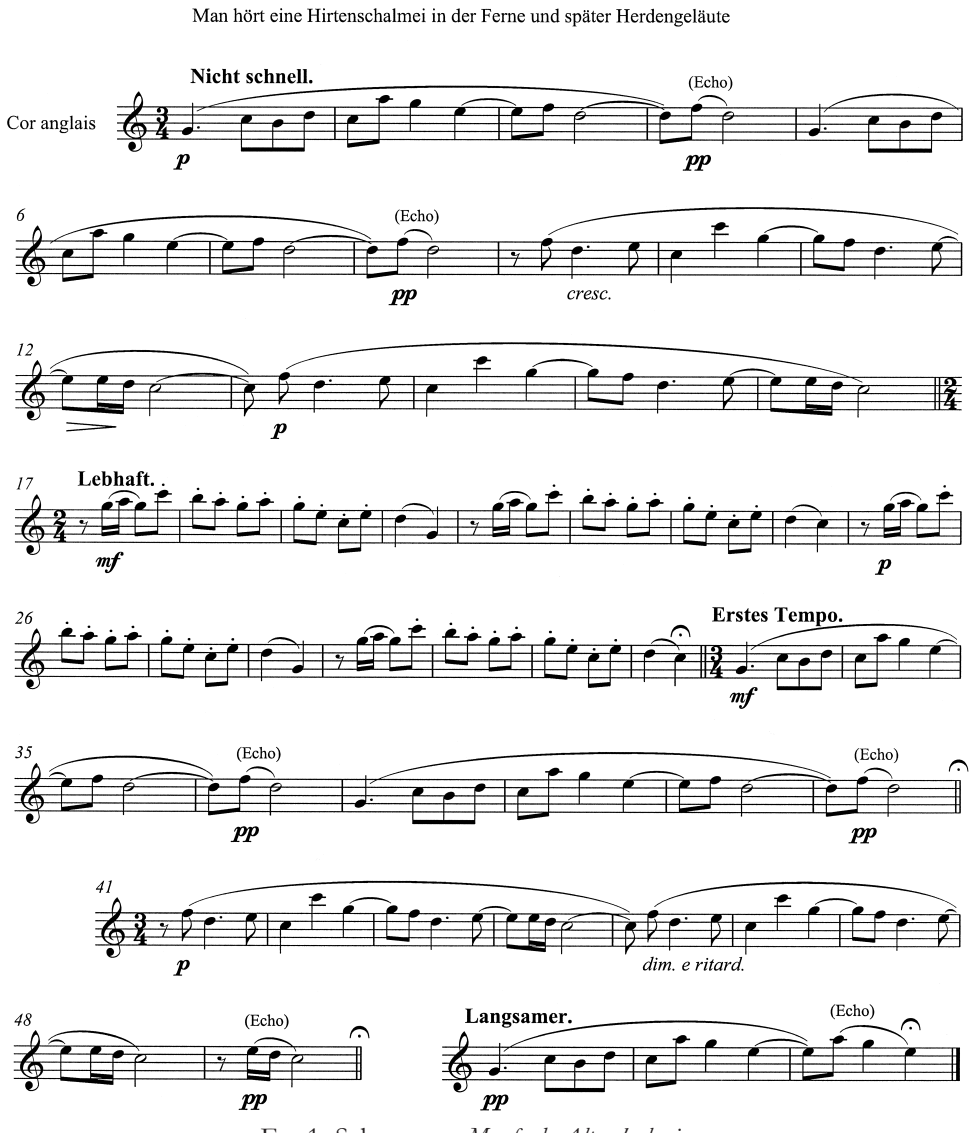
In his famous review of the *Symphonie fantastique* (1835), Schumann derided Fétis's criticism of Berlioz's own *ranz des vaches* as ''gloomy and tasteless'' (''dunkel und geschmacklos''). His retort: ''Wander through the Alps or any other herding country, and listen to the pipes and horns. That's the way they sound.''[63] Perhaps he thought of these words when he wrote *Alpenkuhreigen* music for Byron's *Manfred* almost twenty years later (Ex. 1).[64] The English horn melody is simple, a rising and falling arch; its rhythms are characterized by off-beat held notes, as if the player is either running out of breath or walking as he plays; its implied harmonies are clear, even clumsy, conceivable as ''pastoral'' tonic and dominant pedals; and it is followed by that familiar trope of natural landscapes, an echo. Strangely, this last feature makes the whole sound slightly forced or artificial, rather than ''authentically'' or ''naturally'' gloomy and tasteless. At first the echo is very short, just the final two notes. Then, on the repetition of the second phrase, and in the central *Lebhaft* section, in which the echo repeats the whole melody, it is very long, indeed too long, becoming a kind of meta-echo (see mm. 13–16 and 25–32). The melody moves from the natural realm to a more abstract and imaginary one. I would suggest that the melody's treatment is symptomatic of Schumann's approach to the incidental music of *Manfred* as a whole.

Schumann's music seems on the surface to act as a kind of realistic representation of the *ranz des vaches*, becoming part of the surrounding landscape. While this might seem appropriate for incidental music to a staged performance, in Byron's ''mental theatre'' the *Alpenkuhreigen* as a stand-in for mountain scenery becomes problematic

[63] ''Fétis über Hector Berlioz und dessen Symphonie,'' *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 2 (1835), 197–8, 201–2; Robert Schumann, ''Hector Berlioz: Episode de la vie d'un Artiste etc.,'' *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 3 (1835), 47.

[64] A point should be made about the libretto. As stated, Schumann's preference was for Suckow's translation. This is the version used in the score included in the *Collected Works*. The layout of the text in that edition, however, is different from that of the autograph. Later editions (such as Pohl's) use different translations, and among other alterations often abbreviate the libretto. As much as possible, I have used the autograph as my authority; on the whole I have ''retranslated'' Suckow's text into Byron's words, unless the meaning is greatly different in the German and, to avoid confusion with regard to text layout, have omitted most of the dialogue from the scores shown. Many thanks to David Bretherton for preparing the music examples.

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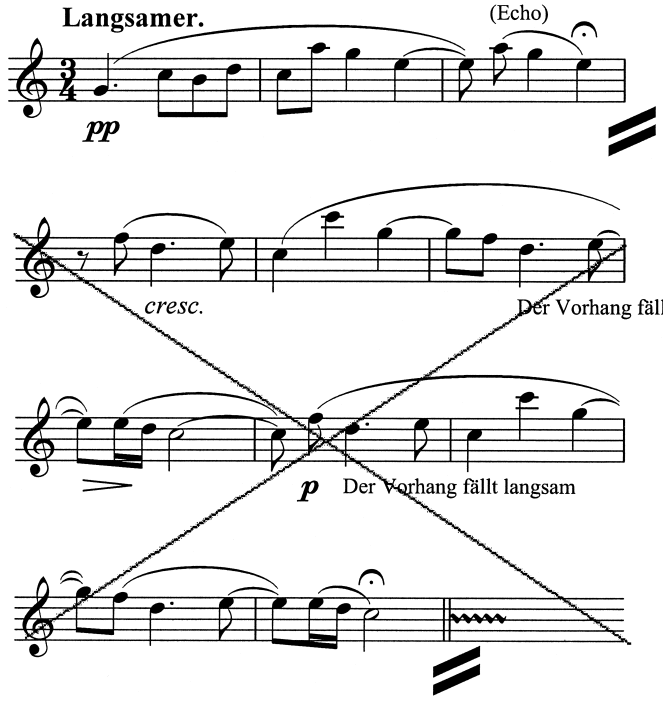


Ex. 1: Schumann, *Manfred*, *Alpenkuhreigen*.

when its echo does not resound from imaginary valleys but from off stage. Yet, as we know, that was how Schumann's music for *Manfred* was first performed, and the *Alpenkuhreigen* scene is the one moment at which the autograph score bears a tangible trace of a performance, perhaps a staging.[65] In the published version the scene ends with a slower repetition of the opening phrase, abbreviated, with a three-note echo (mm. 50–2). The curtain drops, bringing Part I to a close. An alternative ending is provided in the autograph: the second melody of the first section is repeated, *pianissimo*. As the echo lingers the curtain slowly falls ("Der

[65] Robert Schumann, *Musik zu Lord Byrons Manfred*, Berlin, Deutsches Staatsbibliothek, Schumann MS 21.

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Ex. 2: Schumann, *Manfred*, Discarded ending to the *Alpenkuhreigen*.

Vorhang fällt langsam") (Ex. 2). The alternative ending is crossed through in red pencil, whose author is unclear, although it obviously stems from a performance.[66] It is the only editorial cut in the whole score. (Other markings in red pencil are confined to the emphasis of dynamic and tempo indications.)

There is no clear musical reason why the excision should be preferred, which implies that the decision was made out of consideration for the dramatic effect. The clue may lie in how the curtain falls. For the published ending, it simply drops as the characters exit, and with their departure the melody, fragmented, also disappears. This swift death helps maintain a suspension of disbelief. On the other hand, the slow descent of the curtain during the final phrase in the autograph version would emphasize the theatricality of the event, prolonging audience awareness of the stage's paraphernalia; the playing of the complete melody would make it seem like a formal musical close, rather than the gloom and tastelessness of a "real" *ranz des vaches*. Cutting the longer ending in the autograph was an interpretative act commenting on the representational function of music in Schumann's conception, and the viability of that conception in an actual theatrical performance. The composer seems to have approached the scene as if it could be relayed through an abstract, instrumentalized version of events; or as if it provided a commentary, rather than a direct enactment. As is apparent from the performing score, such an approach does not work in theatrical terms, which depend more on

[66] The handwriting may be Liszt's, to whom the score is dedicated and who conducted the first performance. The only other markings correct notes, in dark pencil.

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notions of verisimilitude; yet, as we will see by turning to another moment in Schumann's *Manfred*, privileging the instrumental by making it an independent voice serves to enrich the music's dramatic scope.

The most significant section of Schumann's score is the appearance of Astarte. While never made explicit in Byron's poem, it is generally assumed that Manfred's relationship with Astarte was incestuous.[67] "She was like me in lineaments," he explains to the Witch of the Alps:

> Her eyes,
> Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
> Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
> But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty . . .
> Her faults were mine – her virtues were her own –
> I loved her, and destroy'd her! . . .
> Not with my hand, but heart, which broke her heart;
> It gazed on mine, and wither'd.

We heard at the start how, in his quest to communicate with Astarte, Manfred visits the hall of the spirit king Arimanes; according to the poem, Arimanes is seen on his throne, a globe of fire, surrounded by spirits. This spectacular scene was laden with intertextual references, particularly to the beginning of Book Two of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, while the globe of fire probably came from Isaac Taylor's illustrations for Beckford's *Vathek*.[68] The impressive frame creates great expectations of Manfred's visit to the Underworld, but this is not an Orphic moment, in which the hero achieves his aims through a display of (usually musical) talents. Rather, it resembles, with significant consequences, the conjuration of Helen of Troy in versions of the Faust legend, particularly Christopher Marlowe's: the spectacular aspect is displaced onto the raising of Astarte, at first through her appearance itself and then through her voice. In Schumann's version these two stages are mediated through music.

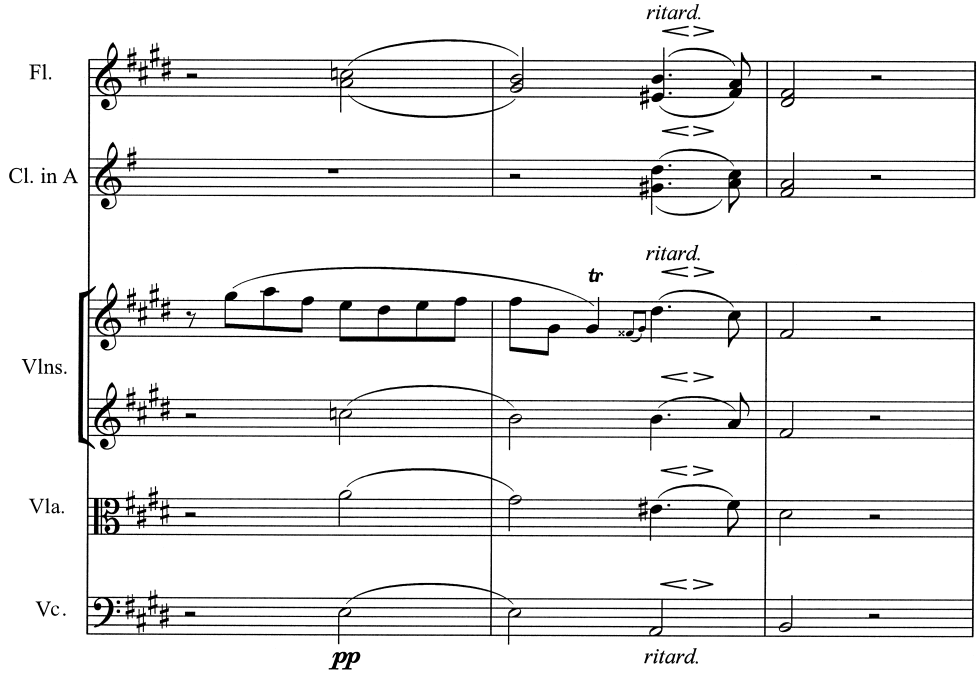
Astarte's mute presence engendered the most *musical* passage of Schumann's score, the longest number up to this point, with the richest orchestration and harmonies, and what might loosely be called a very gestural melodic line.[69] Perhaps the most emotionally and harmonically wrenching moment is Manfred's profession to Astarte, "Thou lovedst me / Too much, as I loved thee" (Ex. 3).

[67] See, from the vast literature: Fiona McCarthy, *Byron: Life and Legend* (London, 2002); Caroline Franklin, *Byron's Heroines* (Oxford, 1992), 222–32; and Atara Stein, " 'I Loved Her and Destroyed Her': Love and Narcissism in Byron's *Manfred*," *Philological Quarterly*, 69 (1990), 199–215.

[68] Meisel, *Realizations* (n. 5), 175–8.

[69] According to Paley, Astarte "encodes music itself." Paley reasons that Astarte is the feminine counterpart to Manfred, whom Daverio calls a "cipher for logos." Daverio, *Robert Schumann* (n. 36), 361; Paley, "The Voice Which Was My Music" (n. 59), 12. See also Leon Botstein, "History, Rhetoric, and the Self: Robert Schumann and Music Making in German-Speaking Europe," *Schumann and his World* (n. 38), 11.

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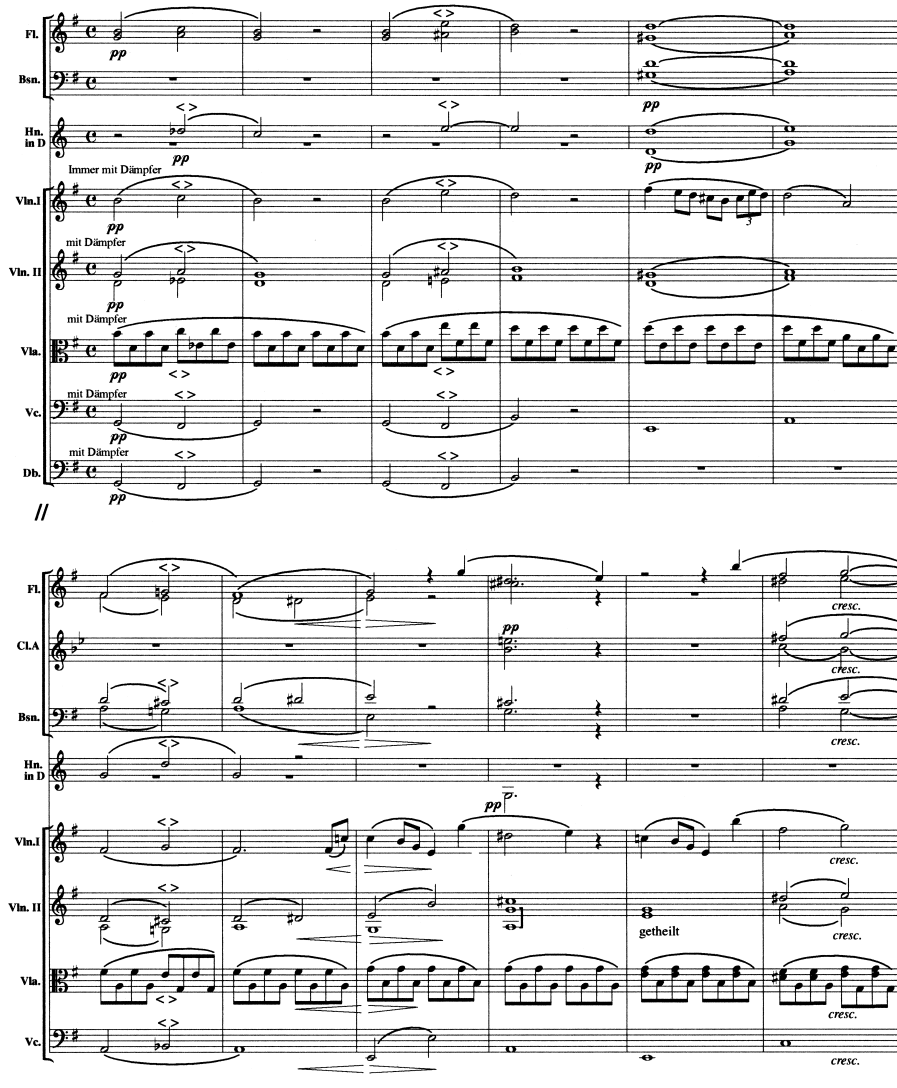


Ex. 3: Schumann, *Manfred*, "Thou lovedst me . . ."

Pursuing a further variation of the preceding swooping lyrical figuration, played by the first violin over sustained string chords, all *con sordini*, the music clenches its heart as a suspended appoggiatura over a II^6 chord: it is indeed too much, producing a half cadence of near Mahlerian anguish. Even when considered without Manfred's pleas, the music oozes intense longing, especially through the almost compulsive use of a neighbor-note cell that generates a sequence of flat-seventh- and suspension-laden harmonic surges within the key of G, couched in a string and woodwind "nightmusic" texture enriched by close-moving upper harmonies and a perpetual rocking figure played by the violas (Ex. 4). These harmonic travels propel comparable motivic or melodic manipulation, demonstrated best by the first violins, which generate a number of closely related and occasionally sequential arabesques between recurrences of the cell, which is characterized rhythmically by three half notes. The next section moves away from the cell and roams further harmonically, inspiring a near-sequential melody from the violins and flutes that finally reincorporates the neighbor-note figure in a move to B major, repeated, as if mirroring Manfred's "But let me hear thee once / – This once – once more!"

All this music, apparently, is not enough: or, to put it into the terms of Byron's poem, Manfred is not content with only seeing Astarte, he must hear her voice. A similar desire occurs with the ghost in *Hamlet*: Horatio, attempting to determine the nature of the vision of the prince's father, repeatedly asks him to speak. His voice would validate the physical likeness, what Stephen Greenblatt

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Ex. 4: Schumann, *Manfred*, "Nightmusic."

calls the phantasmal body, which is unreal: should the former king's actual body be exhumed it would bear the signs and the smell of decay.[70] Astarte uncharneled reveals not her decaying corpse, but her phantasmal body: ''Can this be death?" Manfred asks; like Horatio, he needs it to speak to believe it is really her. But the validity of Astarte's voice falters in that her voice is not, ultimately, her own, but ruled over by other forces, specifically by Nemesis and Arimanes, who charge her to speak. In this she is like Marlowe's Helen (and the first

[70] Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, 2001), 210–11.

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appearance of Helen in Goethe's *Faust II*): she is merely an apparition, a shadowplay, a succubus.[71]

Schumann's musical accompaniment to Astarte's appearance and speech distracts attention from Nemesis's control over her, but nevertheless the spirit's power is retained, encoded in the larger harmonic scheme. The ghost of Manfred's love is raised by Nemesis through the three-fold repetition of a musical incantation: a near-sequential chromatic melody played by the first violins, muted and *ppp*, descends to a rocking figure that creaks to a halt on the dominant of E flat minor, at which point the violins are joined by the lower strings (Ex. 5). After a pause two cellos and two basses begin a unison bass line that, with an awkward rhythm, accompanies the violins' answer to the first three measures, completing the musical period. The third incantation returns to the original melody, over an E flat pedal. This eventually cadences, motivically if not harmonically (there is no resolution), on a high *ppp* woodwind syncopated chord (m. 11). Astarte appears. This measure is not the scene's most imaginative or effective moment; it sounds hackneyed in timbral terms, and it raises the harmonic specter of an E flat major triad.
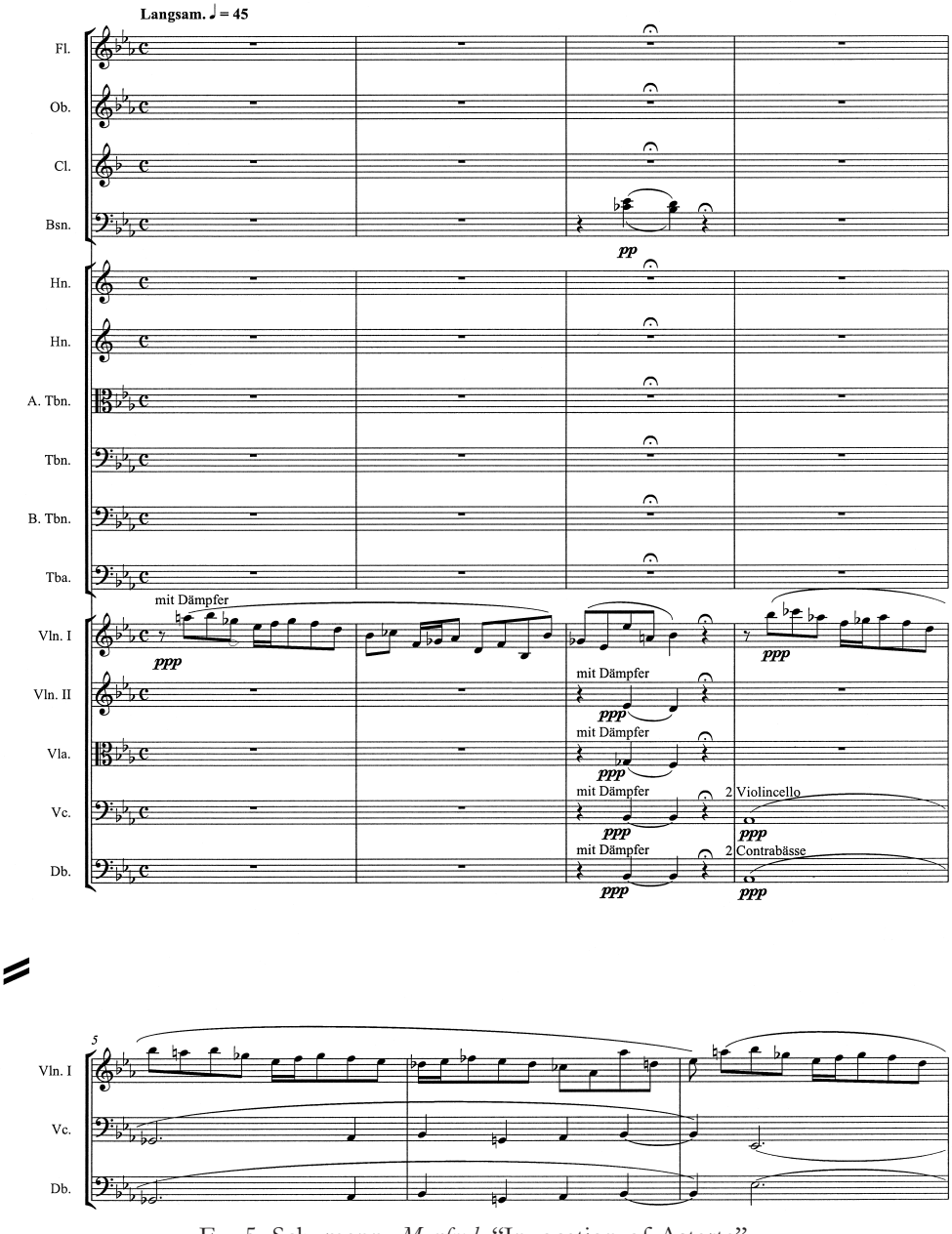
The tonality of E flat major has many associations, from hunting horns to freemasons.[72] A famous example of the key being associated with ghosts comes from an opera Schumann greatly admired, and which strongly influenced his own *Genoveva*: Weber's *Euryanthe*. Although the inclusion of a ghost in *Euryanthe* was criticized as outmoded and dramatically absurd, the music for the ghost's appearance was noted, for better or worse, as some of the most advanced chromatic writing of the day. It returns throughout the opera as a kind of proto-leitmotif, and, along with its adventurous harmonic progressions, is marked by its E flat tonality. The link between E flat major and ghosts in Schumann's oeuvre is most uncanny in the so-called *Letzter Gedanke* that closes the supplement to the *Collected Works*. Also known as the *Geisterthema* because Schumann is claimed to have thought it dictated to him by the spirits of Schubert and Mendelssohn (in a hallucination a few days before his 1854 suicide attempt), the melody resembles those of the Lied "Frühlings Ankunft" (op. 79, no. 19), "Vogel als Prophet" from *Waldszenen* (op. 82, no. 7) and the slow movement of the Violin Concerto (WoO 23).[73]

[71] In terms of the structures of Byron's and Goethe's dramas, the first appearance of Helen in Part II of *Faust* might be related to the beautiful figure conjured before Manfred in the first scene of Act I, to which Manfred responds "Oh God! If it be thus, and *thou* / Art not a madness and a mockery, / I yet might be most happy, I will clasp thee, / And we again will be-." As in *Faust*, on being touched, the vision vanishes.

[72] Schumann's writings on key characteristics do not mention E flat major or minor specifically but do make reference to the relationship between major and minor in general. "Charateristik der Tonleiten und Tonarten," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 2 (1835), 43–4. For an overview of early nineteenth-century theoretical descriptions of E flat major, see Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Rochester, NY, 1996), 245–9.

[73] Brahms used it as the theme of his *Variations for Four-Hand Piano* (op. 23), dedicated to Schumann's daughter Julie, ending the work with a funeral march, over which the *Geisterthema* can be thought to cast a ghostly glow. The Op. 23 variations also pay homage to Schumann stylistically, as discussed in Elaine Sisman, "Brahms and the Variation Canon," *19th-Century Music*, 14 (1990), 138–41.
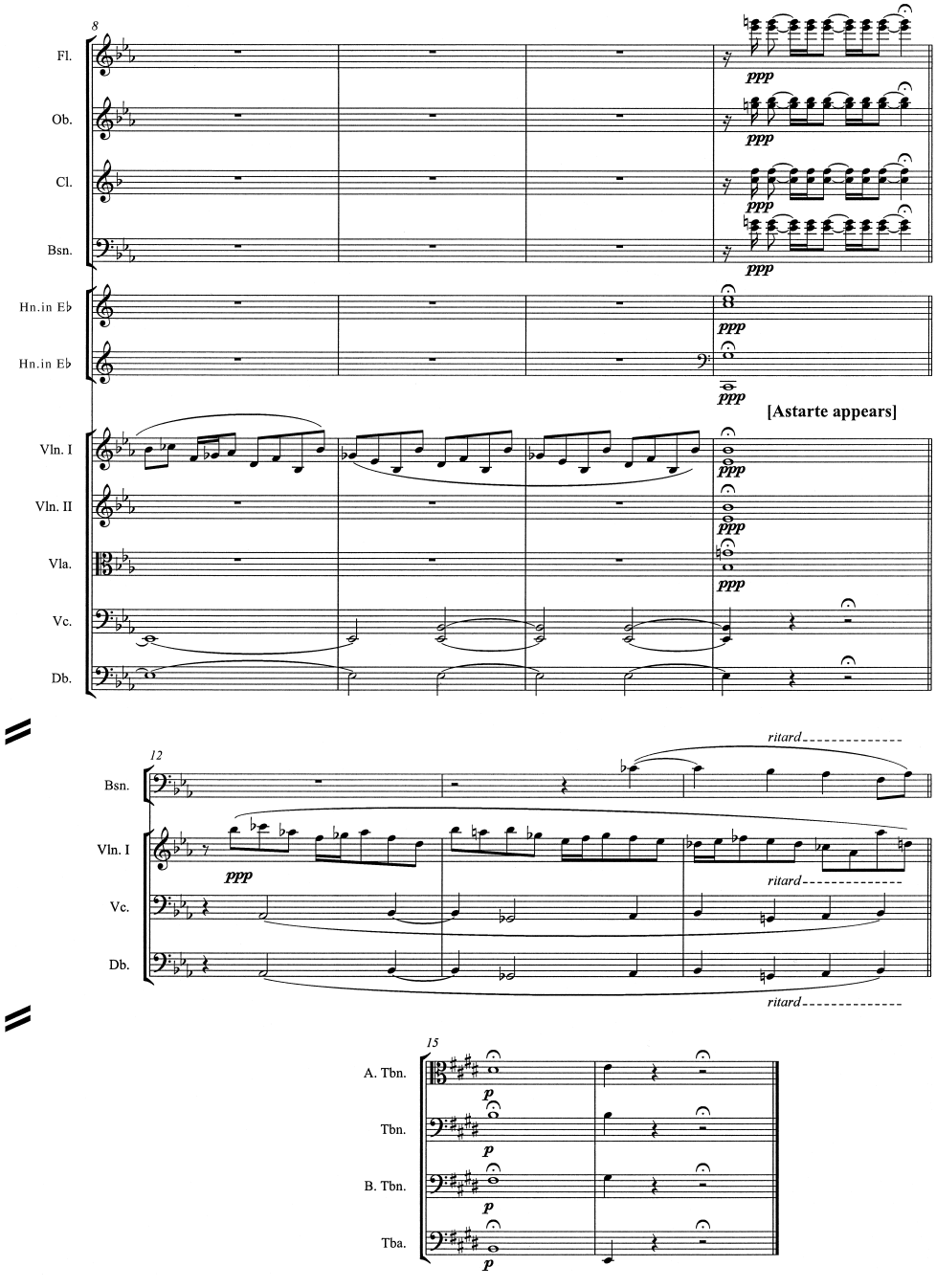
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Ex. 5: Schumann, *Manfred*, "Invocation of Astarte".

Although Schumann's *Manfred* shares with the above examples a tendency to characterize ghosts by the use of E flat, after Astarte's initial appearance, the harmony is invoked, not heard. The second phrase of the wending violin line, shakily underpinned by unison cellos and basses, is redirected to cadence on E flat. But it breaks off before the expected resolution. After Manfred and Nemesis speak,

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Ex. 5: *continued.*

Arimanes asserts his authority in the deep brass tones of the underworld by enharmonically converting Astarte's E flat into a perfect cadence in E major (Ex. 5, mm. 15–16).

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Elizabeth Paley argues that this averted E flat cadence, which she cannot help but fill in with the tonic chord, represents Astarte's "unsung" voice.[74] It could be interpreted instead as taking the possibility of such a voice away. Arimanes's enharmonic conversion of the "desired" E flat chord into a low-timbred perfect cadence on E prevents Astarte from ever proving the veracity of her phantasmal body, or giving it a voice, in the key in which it belonged. The subsequent passage, including those moments at which Astarte speaks, remains in the sharp-sided harmonies commandeered by Arimanes. This distinction renders her voice false. Further, against the *musicality* of the accompaniment, Astarte's speaking voice sounds rather flat, mechanical and lifeless.[75] The phantasmal body deflates, revealing the decaying corpse beneath.

There is one motif that characterizes Astarte, and before bidding her farewell this musical calling-card should be taken into account. What is commonly referred to as the "Astarte theme" occurs in the overture, but another, more resonant version is found in the melodrama. Unusually for such a defining moment, it occurs at the very end of the scene, and not in what I claimed to be her key, E flat. Instead it is conjured up over a dominant pedal on B as, in response to his "Say, thou lovest me," she utters a final "Manfred!" and disappears (Ex. 6). It is just nine quarter notes, played by the flutes in contrary motion with the first violins, a brief sequence leaping from descending minor second to rising diminished/perfect fifth to falling major sixth, marked *pianissimo*. It does not seem very significant, until we take into account the inscription above the flutes' melody, *sehr ausdrucksvoll*, which is rather weighty and unusual in the score as a whole (with the exception of the overture): this is the theme of Astarte's disappearance, promising her reunion with Manfred in the death she has foretold to him, granting release from his guilt and suffering.

The Astarte motif recurs only once, at the very end of the music for *Manfred*. Aside from that instance, which will be discussed below, its importance can be gauged by the deep impression it made on Brahms. He wrote Clara:

> If only I could hear the *Manfred* music with you! That, with the *Faust*, is the most magnificent thing your husband created. But I'd like to hear it as a whole and in combination with the text. What a deeply moving impression it must make. Melodramatic passages are often incomprehensible to me, as it is with Astarte's appearance and speaking. That is the very highest form of musical language; that penetrates right into the depths of the heart.[76]

Strikingly, Brahms singles out as "the very highest form of musical language" not an example from absolute music, a symphony or quartet, but melodrama, one of the least celebrated genres – as tackled by one of its least characteristic composers.[77]

[74] Paley, "The Voice Which Was My Music" (n. 59), 9.
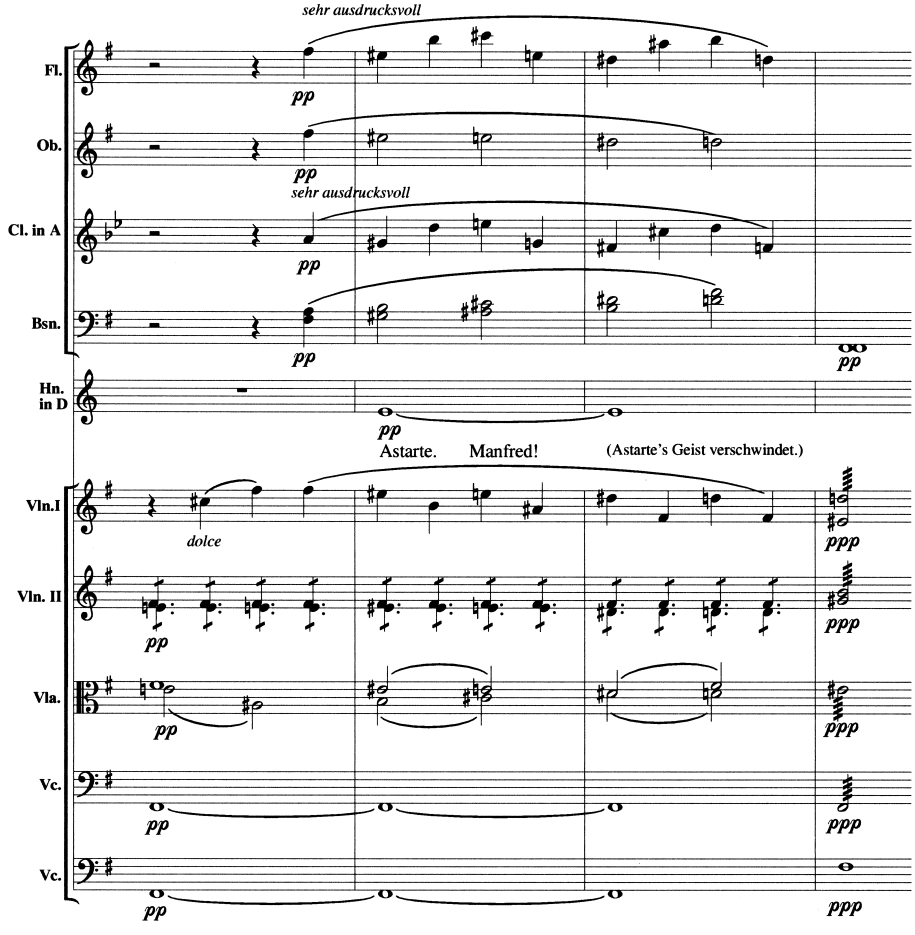
[75] Along similar if more facetious lines, an 1830s burlesque lampooned the overly emphatic declamatory style of the actors in the Covent Garden *Manfred*, calling itself *Man-Fred*. See Margaret J. Howell, *Byron Tonight: A Poet's Plays on the Nineteenth-Century Stage* (Windlesham, Surrey, 1987), 105.

[76] Letter to Clara Schumann, 21 March 1855, *Clara Schumann-Johannes Brahms: Briefe aus den Jahren 1853–1896*, ed. Berthold Litzmann, vol. I (Leipzig, 1927), 100.

[77] Couched in a letter plangent with passionate devotion, it is easy to imagine that the untouchable woman is in Brahms's mind akin to Clara. Astarte becomes a cipher not only

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Ex. 6: Schumann, *Manfred*, Astarte disappears.

The incomprehensibility of music is typically a trait of absolute, instrumental music: that it is invoked here has to do with the friction between music's capability for internal and external representation. Astarte's appearance combines visual and

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for Byron's, but for others', lost, unattainable, guilty, loves. No biographical cipher has been suggested for Schumann. One could probably be found: maybe an incestuous longing for his sister-in-law, Rosalie, to whom he was very close and whose death in 1833 precipitated his breakdown. See Eric Frederic Jensen, *Schumann* (Oxford, 2001), 314. Brahms's appreciation of the *Manfred* music found expression in at least two works, not insignificantly both associated in his mind with Clara: the Fugue in A flat Minor for Organ (WoO 8) and the First Symphony. See David Brodbeck, "'The Brahms–Joachim Counterpoint Exchange; or, Robert, Clara, and 'the Best Harmony between Jos. And Joh.'," *Brahms Studies*, ed. David Brodbeck (Lincoln, Nebr., 1994), 72–7; David Brodbeck, *Brahms: Symphony No. 1* (Cambridge, 1997), 63; and Timothy L. Jackson, "Observations on Crystallization and Entropy in the Music of Sibelius and Other Composers," *Sibelius Studies*, ed. Timothy L. Jackson and Veijo Murtomäki (Cambridge, 2001), 238–9.

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musical excess, but the illusion is undercut by the lack of her authentic voice. Her presence is felt more in the flute motif, paradoxically a motto of departure and absence. Music at first enhances the theatrical effect, conjuring the required external effect (Astarte's body), but subsequently implodes that same effect by querying its validity (her voice). This gain and loss of the visual through music becomes further apparent in the next scene discussed.

> My lord, you bade me wait on you at sunset:
> He sinks behind the mountain.[78]

Compare Manfred's farewell to the setting sun with his attitude towards it on rising. "Thou, fresh breaking Day . . . Why are ye beautiful?" he had demanded, complaining:

> Thou, the bright eye of the universe,
> That openest over all, and unto all
> Art a delight – thou shin'st not on my heart.

Now:

> Glorious Orb! . . .
> Thou chief star!
> Centre of many stars! Which mak'st our earth
> Endurable, and temperest the hues
> And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!
> Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes,
> And those who dwell in them! For near or far,
> Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee
> Even as our outward aspects; thou dost rise,
> And shine, and set in glory. Fare thee well!
> I ne'er shall see thee more. As my first glance
> Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
> My latest look; thou wilt not beam on one
> To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
> Of a more fatal nature. He is gone: I follow.

Gone is the irony of the earlier speech, prefaced by "I cannot love ye." Manfred's exaggerated praise of the Glorious Orb seems like a more genuine valediction. Previously, when contemplating suicide, Manfred was willing to vanish before the sun. Now he follows nature, waiting for the sun to set before he departs. Unlike the sun, he will not rise again. Schumann did not set the sunrise to music, but treated the *Abschied von der Sonne* as melodrama. The presence of music in this instance represents, in a way, its potential to be lost. As each phrase comes into existence, it fades away; the music is forever closing, or "setting." It sinks, like the sun, behind the mountain.

The soft opening tonic chord of A flat major, in its spread scoring, with the flutes floating above the other instruments, has something of a supernatural halo. Even

[78] Byron, *Manfred* (n. 10), 93.

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more intangible is the strings' response: a *pianissimo* three-note motif, moving in contrary motion from the tonic on to a chord of D flat major (Ex. 7, m. 2). It sounds like the vestiges of a cadence, as does the varied repetition of the motif after a measure-long pause. The inverted subdominant harmonies are unsettling, and the eventual cadence on A flat in the next phrase neither satisfies nor reassures. These harmonies do not have the promise of a journey's beginning, but the fatigue and resignation of one drawing to a close.

Thus there is no thematic development over the course of the number; instead, there is a move away from what might once have been a motif. The perfect cadence that arrives on E flat (m. 11) is not allowed to rest but is converted enharmonically to D sharp, diverting the harmonic course to cadence on V of B major. Descending parallel first-inversion chords provide the most descriptive moment: the sun sinks on to a chord enharmonic with E flat major, an oblique preparation for the return of the opening woodwind chord on A flat. Although slightly varied, the repetition of this distinctive occurrence (timbrally and tonally) makes it seem almost thematic, or at least an endpoint. But even it evaporates, floating up into the ether with the recurring first-inversion arpeggios that mark the closing seven measures. In the last two measures the flutes enter on what for them is a new note, f″. One flute then ascends to a″, the Picardy third of the final cadence on F minor, a final glimmer of light.

But this is not music's last appearance in Schumann's *Manfred*. Yet to come is the most contentious scene: Manfred's death. Spirits lay claim to his soul. He denies their powers, saying "away! I'll die as I have lived – alone." And he rejects an abbot's remonstrances with him to repent and pray. With the bathetic words, "old man! 'tis not so difficult to die," Manfred expires. The Abbot ends the poem:
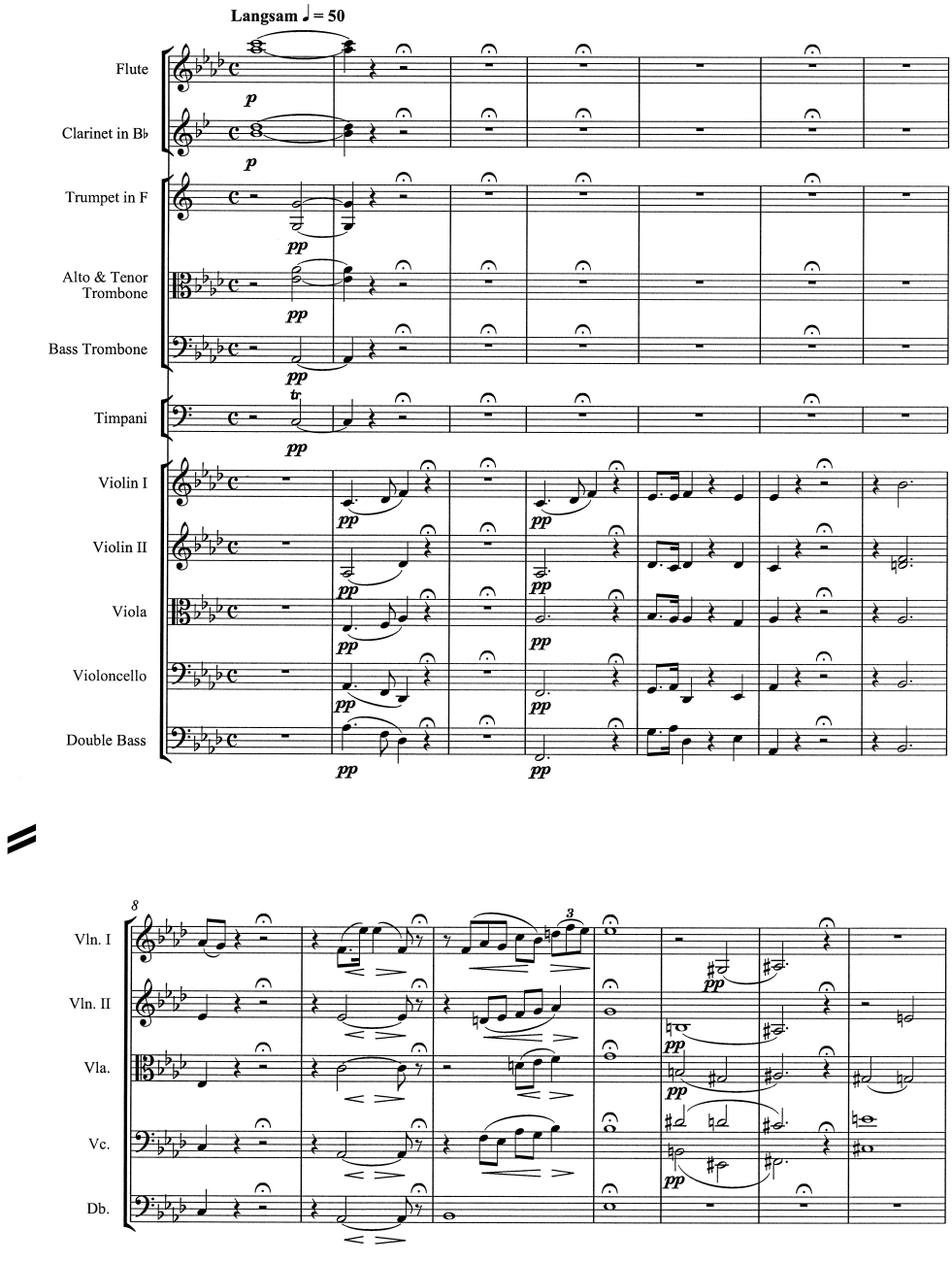
> He's gone – his soul hath ta'en its earthless flight –
> Whither? I dread to think – but he is gone.

No words are changed in Schumann's setting, but throughout the final stages of Manfred's demise a requiem is heard, which breaks into a glorious "Et lux perpetua" as the Abbot, somewhat unconvincingly, wonders where he has gone. Manfred is redeemed.

Recalling the example of the *ranz des vaches*, one might say that the musical accompaniment was scene painting; the choir just happened to be singing in the background, perhaps willing Manfred to repent, but no more. And of course the requiem only expresses hope for or supplication to "light eternal," it does not guarantee that the deceased will be redeemed.[79] This was not enough to convince Friedrich Nietzsche, who declared Schumann's *Manfred* "a mistake and a

[79] Donald Francis Tovey wrote: "Schumann has gone beyond Byron's text in accompanying the death-scene of Manfred with the sounds of a requiem sung from the neighbouring monastery, but I see no reason to believe that there is any substantial contradiction to Byron in thus heightening the effect of the close. Schumann's reasons are not sentimental. The monastery is in the neighbourhood of the scene; and it is the essence of Byronism to admit the existence of what it so ostentatiously defies." "Overture to Byron's *Manfred*, op. 115," *Essays in Musical Analysis*, vol. IV (Oxford, 1946), 113.

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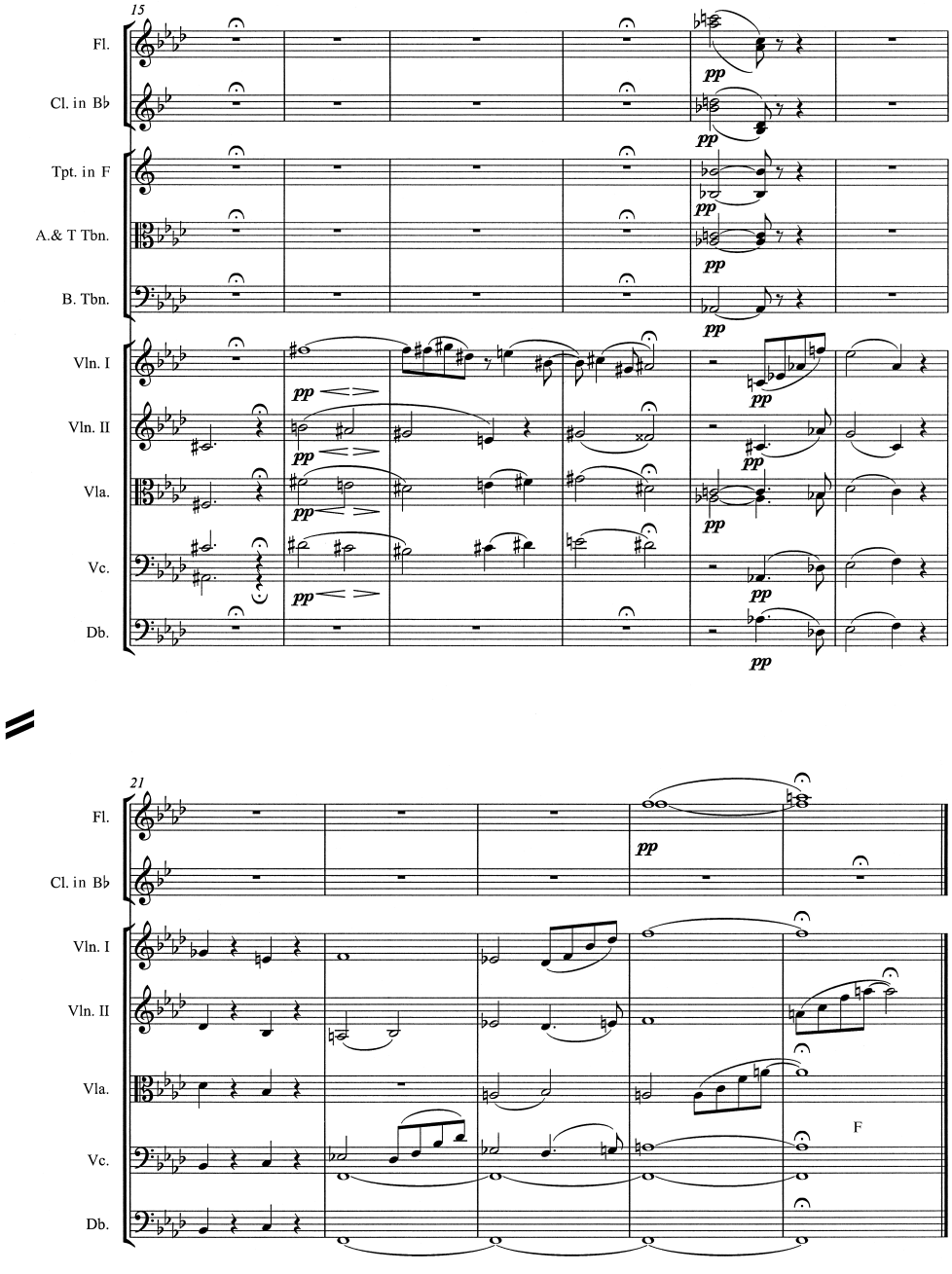


Ex. 7: Schumann, *Manfred*, *Abschied von der Sonne*.

misunderstanding to the extent of injustice."[80] There is something deliberate about the interaction between the dying Manfred, the Abbot and the choir in this final scene, even down to the list of contents, which gives as the first line not Manfred's

[80] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Judith Norman, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge, 2002), 138.

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Ex. 7: *continued.*

words but "Requiem." Although it is set as melodrama, with spoken voices against a musical background, for the first time in the score Schumann notates extensively the rhythms in which each voice should speak. Thus Manfred's farewell to the world is timed – controlled, even – according to a four-part chorale. Whether or not he

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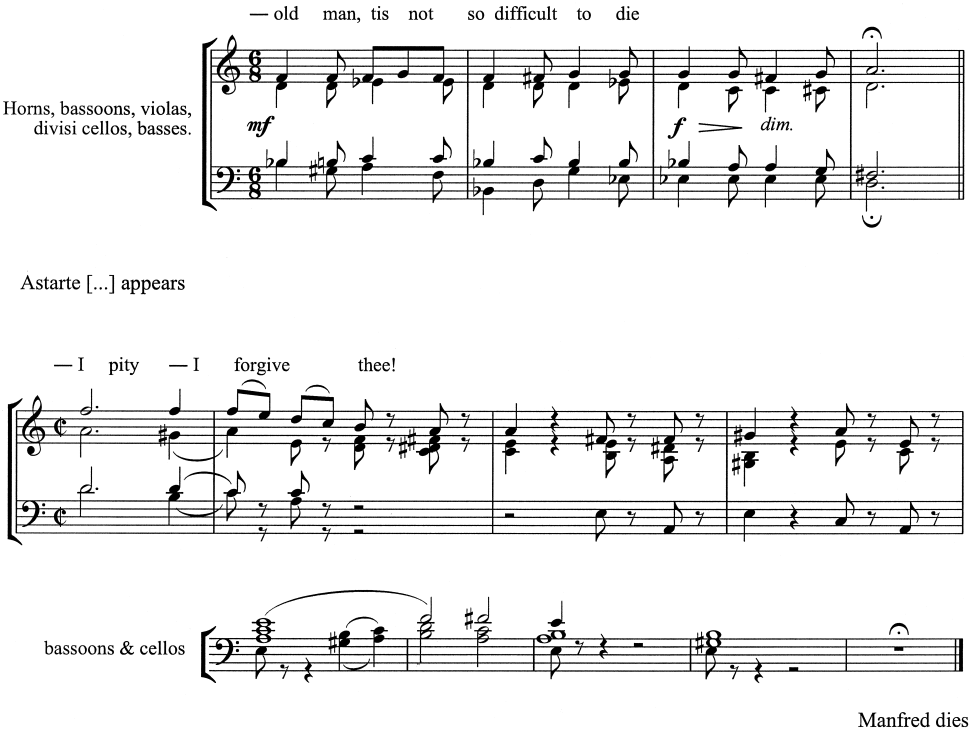
wanted to be redeemed, in Schumann's version his death is manipulated towards salvation.

Why would Schumann want to redeem Manfred? Although not Roman Catholic (Schumann described himself as "religious without religion") he composed three works whose title included the word requiem (*Requiem für Mignon*, op. 98b, the *Requiem* appended to his op. 90 Lenau settings, and the *Requiem* op. 148) and a Mass. These pieces coincided with his move from Protestant Saxony to the Catholic Rhineland, and his post as Music Director at Düsseldorf may have contributed significantly to his rising interest in church music, as might his increasing age and deteriorating health. In an 1851 letter to August Strackerjan Schumann wrote: "It remains the artist's highest goal to devote his energies to sacred music. But in our youth we all still have our roots planted firmly in the Earth with its joys and sorrows; with increasing age the boughs also strive upwards. And thus I hope that this time will not be too far away from the fulfillment of my aspirations."[81] One composes a requiem, he said elsewhere, "for oneself," a potential explanation for the prevalence of redemption as a theme not only of his religious music but in the dramatic works too: aside from *Manfred*, it appears in *Das Paradies und die Peri*, *Genoveva*, *Requiem für Mignon*, *Der Rose Pilgerfahrt* and, of course, *Die Szenen aus Goethes Faust*.

While Goethe's was not the first version of the Faust legend to redeem the title character, Goethe's salvation of Faust by the penitent Gretchen caused consternation amongst readers and critics on the publication of *Faust*, Part II in 1833.[82] As Wolfgang Menzel dismissively put it, "if Faust deserves to be saved after seducing and deserting Gretchen, then any pig rolling around in a flower bed deserves to be made a gardener."[83] Manfred – apparently guilty of incest and the death of his beloved, not to mention consorting with the supernatural – would be just such a swine; a connection that might have been made at the first Covent Garden production of *Manfred*, a year after the appearance of *Faust*, Part II, which made the following alteration of Byron's ending: "Just as Manfred is breathing his last sigh, the spirit of Astarte reappears, not, as heretofore, in her grave clothes, but in a state of glory, and pronounces his forgiveness, while a band of celestial beings with golden harps interpose between the dying man and the demons."[84] "The effect was a good one," the writer concluded. According to Bishop's autograph, the scene was a spectacular *tour de force*, and one that in its reading of Byron's text bears comparison to Schumann's version. Manfred having declared, "tis not so difficult to die!" Astarte's music is heard again (Ex. 8). "Ha! That voice! It rouses! Renovates" Manfred murmurs. Astarte appears. (A further repetition of Astarte's music has been excised from the score.) "I pity – I forgive thee," she pronounces, and Manfred moves towards her phantom. A descending string passage leads into a cadence on E major, played by bassoons and cellos. At Manfred's death there was

[81] Letter to August Strackerjan, 13 January 1851, *Briefe, Neue Folge* (n. 32), 281–2.
[82] On Lessing's *Faust* fragments, see Philip M. Palmer and Robert P. More, *The Sources of the Faust Tradition from Simon Magus to Lessing* (New York, 1936), 273–86.
[83] Wolfgang Menzel, "Faustiana," *Literaturblatt*, 47 (6 May 1833), 187.
[84] Covent Garden *Globe*, 30 October 1834, 3.

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Ex. 8: Bishop, Manfred's death.

to be a tremendous storm of thunder, lightning and snow. The evil spirits sing, rocks fall, and discovered at the back is the palace of Arimanes. This *Götterdämmerung* is halted by the sudden arrival of the Good Spirits, causing the evil ones to retire, abashed. Strangely, they close the work with a verse from Byron's poem not heard in its original position, at Manfred's first invocation of the spirits, and one whose meaning here is ambiguous: "Earth, ocean, air, night, mountains, winds, thy star, / Are at thy beck and bidding, Child of Clay! / Before thee as thy guest their spirits are –, / What wouldst thou with us, son of mortals – say?"
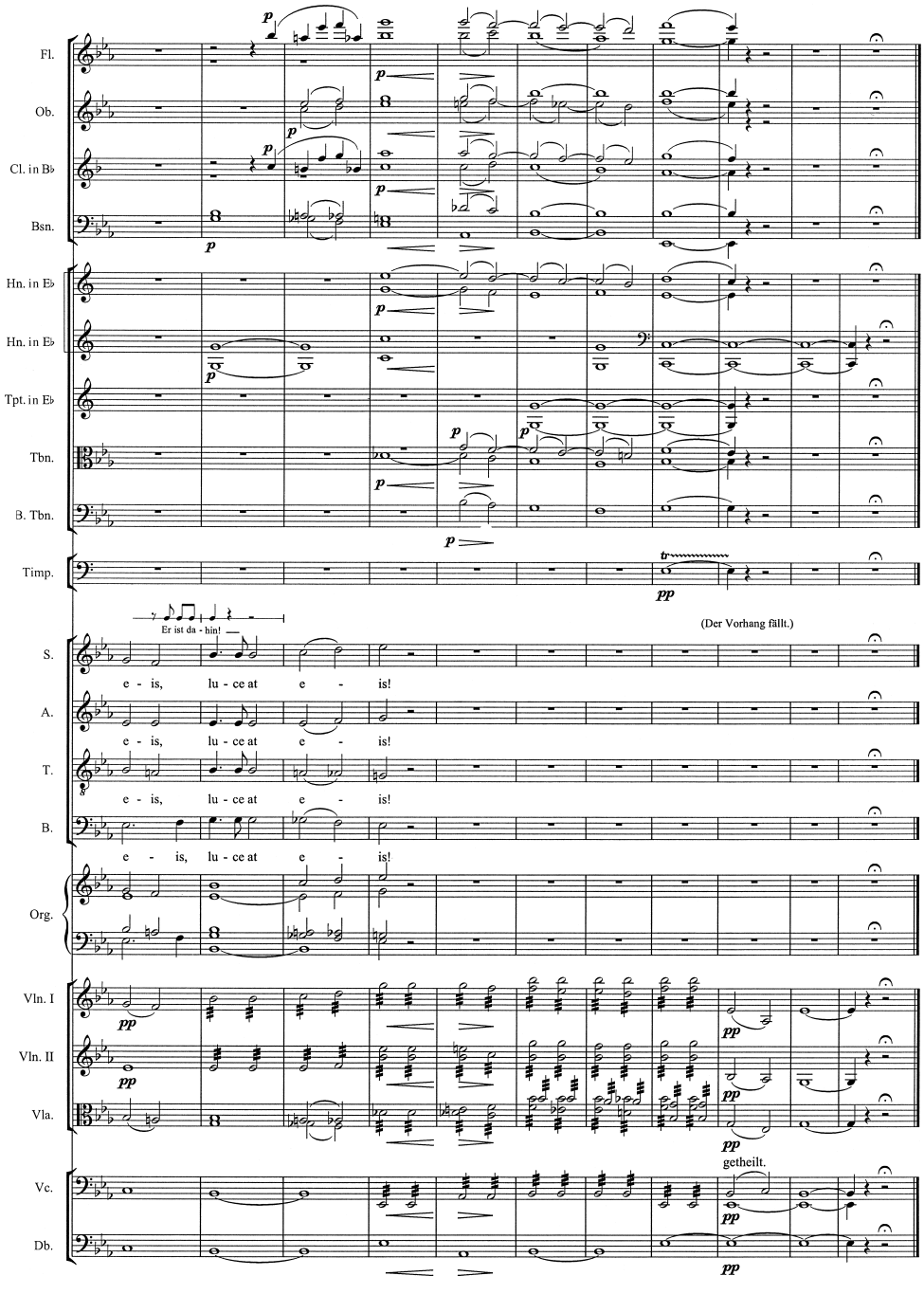
Schumann's salvation of Manfred probably had roots closer to home.[85] While Suckow did not alter the ending of his translation, he advocated Manfred's salvation in his prefatory essay to the volume. Taking his inspiration from *Faust*, he suggests that a heavenly choir surround Manfred on his deathbed.[86] The parallel between this idea and Schumann's score is striking. Where the two seem to diverge is with Suckow's next idea: "A lonely but self-assured voice from within promises and guarantees the dying Manfred final freedom."[87] The implication is that Astarte calls

[85] In an attempt to explain Manfred's lack of fear when faced by death, Franklin argues that he knows Astarte has already entered heaven, because of her thrice-repeated farewell, and that she vanished, not to be recalled. Manfred thus attains inner peace, being freed from any obligation to fear or conform to the traditional Christian view of the afterlife. *Byron's Heroines* (n. 67), 231.

[86] Suckow, *Byron's "Manfred"* (n. 43), 62.

[87] Suckow, 62.

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Ex. 9: Schumann, *Manfred*. Astarte's motive at the end of the Requiem.

Manfred to join her, much as the Covent Garden production had her return as a version of the *Ewig-weibliche*. He hears the voice he longed for. Whereas in Astarte's previous appearance everyone could hear her mordant tones, now only her beloved

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recognizes – can understand – them. The theatrical presentation Suckow argued for finally privileges the internally conveyed message as the most meaningful. We are back in the mental theatre.

It is not known whether in the Weimar performance of Schumann's *Manfred* Astarte reappeared on stage as a kind of redeeming guardian angel. The choral requiem does seem to act as Suckow's heavenly choir. But where is Astarte's voice? If she speaks, it is after Manfred has died. As the Abbot intones "Er ist dahin!" and the chorus reaches its climactic "luceat eis!" the flute slips in with a phrase we have heard before: it is a version of the Astarte motif that marked her disappearance at the end of the earlier melodrama (Ex. 9). This time, however, Astarte finds her resolution onto E flat major, the key in which the work now draws to a close. Finally, through Manfred's death and, in this Faustian version, his redemption through the eternal feminine, their spirits can be united. Astarte's final appearance, in Schumann's version, then, is conveyed through music. Although the return of her motif cannot really be considered the voice Suckow suggests Manfred hears on his deathbed, because it is heard after he expires, its resolution does suggest at the very least that his torment has ended. In the *Alpenkuhreigen*, the sound of the shepherd's pipe was associated by Manfred at first with mortality, but subsequently implicates the humanity of the hunter who saves him from suicide. Here, Astarte's wind motif redeems him from hell. Unlike Bishop's score, which engages music to emphasize theatrical effect, Schumann's *Manfred* proposes music as a tool to render the visual, yet uses that same tool to question the validity of the image. Having been aligned with the visual and then its loss in the sunset scene, through the redemption of Manfred (particularly by Astarte), music now regains its ability to signify, but on its own terms; as inner voices.

Setting up this dialectic between theatrical and instrumental, or outer and inner, musics reinscribes the dominant romantic discourse about absolute music, privileging it as some kind of higher expression. Such an attitude was what made problematic Brahms's praise of Schumann's melodramatic music for the raising of Astarte as "the highest form of musical language." Treating Astarte's motif as an "inner voice" at the end of *Manfred* makes this "instrumentalization" of Schumann's dramatic music all the more clear. As does the work's reception, for it entered the repertoire almost exclusively through the vehicle of its overture – perhaps the ideal "mental theatre." Yet the transformation of *Manfred* into an instrumental work was not a question of music's ability to express the ineffable, but rather a failure of the dramatic. Or maybe it was to deny the dramatic: that, as with Byron, the fear was not that the work was untheatrical, but that it was too theatrical. Saving Schumann's *Manfred* for the mental theatre preserves a certain conception of German music drama, and indeed German music, but not the only one – and perhaps not even the one that today we most wish to value.

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