

Preface

During the spring 2016 semester, I had the opportunity to experience Gustav Mahler's (1860–1911) colossal Symphony No. 8 performed live by the Philadelphia Orchestra with supporting artists – many supporting artists: there were 450 musicians on- and off-stage, including orchestral instrumentalists alongside the Kimmel Center's Fred J. Cooper Memorial organ (the largest of its kind in the United States), three whole choirs (one of which is a children's chorus), and eight all-star vocal soloists. Composed in 1906, Mahler's Eighth Symphony is the most grandiose composition in his oeuvre – he declared that, "all the rest of my works are no more than introductions" – and, indeed, of the entire symphonic repertory. Mahler's Eighth garnered its subtitle "Symphony of a Thousand" on the occasion of its premiere in Munich, Germany, in 1910, in which a staggering roster of 1,029 performers participated. The performances by the Philadelphia Orchestra in their 2015–2016 season had special significance as this very ensemble had given the American premiere 100 years prior, in the spring of 1916, and with an even larger battery of 1,068 musicians.

In fact, the Philadelphia Orchestra's performance of Mahler's "Symphony of a Thousand" I attended coincided with the first day of spring break, just as I had planned it. What better than Mahler's symphonic extravaganza to punctuate, or rather purge, the maelstrom of midterm week? In retrospect, this stressed out way of characterizing a college campus at one of its busiest times strikes me as too jaded, dystopian even. Yes, there is the turbulence of exams and grades, putting classes for *next* semester in shopping carts and meeting advisors, obtaining signatures for the impending deadline of student groups' base budgets, and noisy, virtually ubiquitous construction (Campus Town, the Student Center and STEM Complex). But there are many, many serener but by no means less significant activities going on at the College concurrently: intimate and inspiring class discussions, unanticipated findings in a lab, lunch with friends and colleagues, Frisbee among the "balls" (pixels). *TCNJ Journal of Student Scholarship* and the work that it transmits are of this second, more blissful order of things

While I went to Mahler Eight desiring to have the midterm slate wiped clean with symphonic volume and thickness, it turned out that the most understated instants served that purpose better. Perhaps the moments of (thrilling) bombast gave me fresh ears to appreciate the symphony's more crucial, if sometimes barely audible, subtleties. One such moment was when the voice of "Mater gloriosa" wafted from an acoustically improbable location: soprano Lisette Oropesa sang from the audience in the back of the Kimmel's second tier. Simultaneously representing the Virgin Mary and the "Eternal Feminine," that favorite chimera of the German Romantics, Oropesa's "Glorious Mother" provided a discreet bridge between the two parts of Mahler's symphony, based on the Latin hymn "Veni, creator spiritus" (Come, creator spirit) and the final scene from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*, respectively.

The term "symphony" comes from the Greek *sumphōnos* ("sound together"), a fitting way to conceive of the diverse disciplines, methodologies, perspectives, and voices that emerge from this *Journal's* pages. The student authors and faculty sponsors represented here are multidisciplinary, and the impact of their collective work is greater than the sum of its parts – analogous to Mahler's "Symphony of a Thousand" with its medieval Latin and German Romantic source texts, its admixture of genres (symphony, oratorio, cantata, opera), and its kaleidoscopic sonic details. More generally, to be "symphonic" implies an allure, an almost inexplicable charm; a mainstream musical reference is The Supremes' sweet 1965 number-one hit penned by Motown's Holland-Dozier-Holland team: "Whenever you're near I hear a symphony, a tender melody pulling me closer, closer to your arms." Against the larger TCNJ backdrop, this *Journal* may seem somewhat quiet and distant, metaphorically speaking, but it represents some of our most vital experiences. One just needs to pay attention – to "listen" and "hear" – and to be drawn in.

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