

Discuss 3 contrasting passages within the 3rd movement of Mahler 4 which paint an image of Heaven.

Mahler's 4th symphony creates an iconic view of the religious place of eternal life, with the entire symphony subtly leading towards the 4th movement (the 4th movement is a song; a child (soprano) presents a sunny, naive vision of Heaven and describes the feast being prepared for all the saints). One may gather from this that the idea of Heaven plays an important role in this symphony. Indeed, the idea depicted by Mahler of transcending mankind after death is a very prominent idea, particularly in the 3rd movement.

From the opening, the third movement of Mahler's 4th symphony paints an image of great peace and tranquillity; the warmth and stability of the lower strings and the rich homophonic texture radiates an image of calm. In order to bring about the idea of a transcendental movement towards the Gods, Mahler introduces different instruments in accordance with their pitch and timbre. The lower strings lead into the 2nd violins (at b.17, played "sul D" for a richer, thicker sound), which in turn lead into the woodwind (an airy timbre, perhaps to illustrate the ascent to heaven). The rising melody, alongside the changing timbre of the sounding instruments, emphasises the ascent towards Heaven and eternal peace. In b.31, the 1st violins are on a very top D, being played *pianissimo*. The serene sound quality of this scoring technique emphasises the idea of perfect tranquillity, on the way towards Heaven. This very delicate section never rises to more than *piano* in dynamics, and it is this which highlights the idea of calm. The harmonics on the harp, in addition to the extended cadential figure, enforce the suggestion of peace and the image of heaven.

Secondly, section 11 (b.283 - b.315) displays many of the characteristics similar with those of section 1. Firstly, the idea of ethereal strings is once again demonstrated. Long sustained dominant pedal in the 1st violins, 2nd cellos and double basses creates a feeling of ease and peacefulness, whilst also creating the idea of movement (wanting to resolve). This movement may perhaps be the ascent up towards Heaven. Ultimately however, the feeling of being grounded does still remain, as the long sustained notes (D octave) limits the idea of movement. Over the top of this *piano* foundation, the horns play a melody marked *forte*, but also marked *langsam*. *Langsam*, meaning "to be played broadly in tempo", is used here to emphasise the dying away of the great disorder that occurred in the previous section, and again provide a solid foundation of peace. The violins also play a similar role to those in the first section by sustaining the very high, almost airy notes again. The difference this time is that they are also providing a countermelody, within this register. At b.303, the texture changes and just comprises the strings (no other instrument family). The timbre of the strings is ideal for creating this idea of perfect tranquillity, especially when marked *subito pianissimo*. This phrase leads into an extended cadential passage. Once again, this enforces the suggestion of peace, and creates this vision of the ideal nature of heaven.

In b.314, the calmness erupts seemingly out of nowhere, with violins and 2 clarinets playing two notes (B and G#), leading into a giant coda in E major. It is if by this point we have reached the gates of heaven, or our journey up towards this land of eternal life is complete. Dynamics (*fff*), the key (E major) and the scoring (all forces except percussion, where it is just the timpani and triangle) add to this saintly vision of eternal power and grandness of God. The strings are instructed to play at will, which creates the impression of a huge wash of colour as the contrasting notes from each player coincide. The wind and brass play a grand, startlingly loud chord over the top of the strings, adding to the texture and timbre. The harps conventional scoring here is effective in that arpeggios create an upwards shimmer of notes - ideal for again, the ascent towards heaven. Further adding to the effect of immense grandeur and royalty are the use of timpani. Combined with the almost fanfare like figures in the brass, the power and stringency show through and add too the idea of eternal glory. The section eventually gives way, and we hear the quietest part of the movement (the idea of eternal rest). The ending, which lets the bass drop out leaves the moment on a chord with a floating and ethereal quality. We now move back to G major, and the finishing, delicate chord creates the impression of never-ending peace; The final chord being a signal we have arrived in Heaven.