

**Richard Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*:  
An Analysis of Origins, Topics, and Symphonic Characteristics**

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## PREFACE

This thesis addresses Richard Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*'s unsettled program and assesses multiple accounts of the portrayal of the program and the evidence provided by each. In addition, I explore the ideas of landscape in relation to *Eine Alpensinfonie* and how Strauss manages the alpine landscape as played out through his music. This exploration is substantiated by a thorough melodic analysis of the piece, which has organized themes hierarchically and given them titles based on their arrangement, style, and position within the piece.

There are multiple questions that this thesis addresses in relation to the program and the thematic material of *Eine Alpensinfonie*. Numerous Strauss scholars have provided suggestions on how the program could be interpreted, though there has not been a definite answer to the question of what the program is for this piece of music. The question that I ask is what are some of the different assertions made about the program of *Eine Alpensinfonie* and do they hold up to critical analysis of other evidence found throughout my own research. The thematic material in the piece has been analyzed thoroughly by Rainer Bayreuther in his comprehensive work on *Eine Alpensinfonie*, though I am adding to what he has already generated. The central questions related to the thematic material are, do the themes and motives match or shape the program of the piece and how do ideas on topic theory interact with the structure and how does the thematic material relate to the ideas on topic theory in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the first chapter, I will explore the programmatic elements of *Eine Alpensinfonie* and compare the numerous approaches provided through the scholarship of Ernst Krause, Peter Höyng, and Charles Youmans. Both Krause and Höyng present the program through an autobiographical lens, using quotations and numerous correspondence by Strauss. Youmans analyzes the programmatic development of *Eine Alpensinfonie*, tracking how it changed over the

fifteen-year period and how an artist, Karl Stauffer-Bern, and Friedrich Nietzsche might have influenced the direction of the program that Strauss was working with. This chapter then explores the significance of each piece of evidence and how they interact with the final publication and their place in the larger discussion on programmatic material within *Eine Alpensinfonie*.

The second chapter engages with topic theory and how the themes and motives that Strauss uses throughout the piece interact with different topics and how the two ideas are related, though separate entities. In addition, the second chapter will explore the relationship of the program and the music and how the understanding of the program affects our perception of the music, or vice versa. This is accomplished through careful and thorough examination of the individual themes and motives within the piece, as well as their manipulated versions. Some of the titles for the themes are given by the title that is associated with their section (i.e. the Ascent theme first appears during the Ascent section), and others were titled by myself and how I perceived them operating within the piece.

## **CHAPTER ONE (Program Music)**

“I was never revolutionary. The only revolutionary in our time was Strauss.”<sup>1</sup> Thus Arnold Schoenberg described Richard Strauss in 1923. We could easily argue against him, citing evidence of the development of a new age of composition after the aesthetic of the Romantic period and the nineteenth century. But Schoenberg directs us to what Strauss did during his own lifetime. Strauss composed across a broad range of genres, from Lieder to opera, tone poems, and numerous solo works. His Lieder embraced a rich, Romantic sound, which he continued to

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<sup>1</sup>Ross, Alex. *The Rest is Noise*. New York: Picador, 2007, 19.

compose in through the *Four Last Songs* (1949). His opera was shocking to the public at its first performances (e.g. *Salome*), though it was later hailed for its masterful creation.

Even though he excelled in other genres, Strauss struggled significantly with the symphony. Strauss learned early that he was ill-suited for composing symphonies, when Johannes Brahms commented on his Symphony in F minor (1883-4): “Your symphony contains too much playing about with themes.”<sup>2</sup> Instead of changing his compositional style entirely in order to fit within the boundaries determined by Brahms, Strauss rebranded himself as a composer of a tone poems, which were one of his more successful genres alongside of his operas. This “playing about with themes” style of composing that Brahms is based in Richard Wagner’s compositional style. Wagner’s music dramas were furnished by a multitude of themes and motifs, each of which had a specific connection to the poetic content associated with the dramas. These *Leitmotifs* influenced the compositional style that Strauss had adopted in the creation of his tone poems. While Strauss’s themes did not always have definitive associations with distinct poetic content, they still formed an analogous structure, with the music moving from theme to theme, providing a narrative along the way. The use of Wagner’s compositional style and how it affected the narrative within the tone poem was one reason Strauss became one of the most prolific and prominent figure of program music at the end of the nineteenth century. His tone poems contain diverse program topics, ranging from the life of a hero, a domestic household, a fictitious folklore figure and his practical jokes, to the natural elements of the alpine world. Strauss’s final tone poem, *Eine Alpensinfonie* (1915), has a program that is unspecific. There is substantial room for debate of the work’s programmatic meaning. As is the case for many of his other tone poems, like *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Ein Heldenleben*, and *Sinfonia Domestica*,

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Gilliam, “Strauss, Richard, §2: The tone poet, 1885–98,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed November 23, 2015, *Oxford Music Online*.

he did not include a prose or poetic program for the audience to follow with the music. We are left with historical accounts, correspondence, and the musical materials: 22 sections and their titles. We can also interpret the piece in the context of the composer: his life and remarks. In this chapter, I will explore the many different approaches to the program of *Eine Alpensinfonie*. I will examine closely the 22 titles and how they create the work's form. I summarize the debates about correspondence with Strauss's sister and Ludwig Thuille, the work's evolving title, and how it's relationship with the biography of the painter Karl Stauffer. Finally I consider the piece's autobiographical potential.

*Table 1: List of Richard Strauss's Tone Poems*

<i>Aus Italien</i> , Op. 16 (1886)
<i>Don Juan</i> , Op. 20 (1888)
<i>Macbeth</i> , Op. 23 (1888)
<i>Tod und Verklärung</i> , Op. 24 (1889)
<i>Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks</i> , Op. 28 (1895)
<i>Also Sprach Zarathustra</i> , Op. 30 (1896)
<i>Don Quixote</i> , Op. 35 (1897)
<i>Ein Heldenleben</i> , Op. 40 (1898)
<i>Sinfonia Domestica</i> , Op. 53 (1903)
<i>Eine Alpensinfonie</i> , Op. 64 (1915)

Richard Strauss composed his first tone poem in 1886, *Aus Italien*, resulting from a tour through Italy that he took prior to his appointment as the Kapellmeister at the Munich Court Opera. This early tone poem is not as complex compared to his later works, and is limited in its thematic diversity and development. At this point in his career, Strauss immersed himself in the programmatic music of Liszt and his contemporaries as well as the music dramas of Richard Wagner. After *Aus Italien*, Strauss matured very quickly as a tone poet before the turn of the century. He composed seven tone poems between 1888 and 1900. In the twentieth century, his production declined, as he focused more on opera, composing *Feuersnot*, *Salome*, *Elektra*, *Der*

*Rosenkavalier*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.<sup>3</sup> He composed two tone poems: *Sinfonia Domestica* and *Eine Alpensinfonie*: the latter was the most expansive tone poem he wrote, being over 50 minutes long and having an orchestration of over 125 instruments. Composed in 1915, it was provocatively described by Christopher Morris as the bookend to all tone poems of the “nineteenth” century.<sup>4</sup> It was written for one of the largest orchestras ever, with over 125 musicians involved and including an off-stage brass section, Wagner tubas, a range of percussion instruments (such as thunder and wind machines), organ, and expanded sections throughout the orchestra. The piece is one movement divided into 22 sections, each with a unique and descriptive heading.(see table).

*Eine Alpensinfonie*'s program, as suggested in the headings, outlines an adventure through the Alps from sunrise to sunset. Throughout the piece, the musical scenes capture pastoral ideal's of the Alps: a flowing stream, pastures with farm animals, the mountain summit and the glorious panorama below, a waterfall, as well as a treacherous storm. Strauss began working on *Eine Alpensinfonie* in 1900, but it took him fifteen years to complete. The final composition was premiered in 1915 in Dresden, Germany.<sup>5</sup> Bryan Gilliam has traced this work back to its origins, writing that, “[*Eine Alpensinfonie*] went through the longest gestation period of any of his symphonic works, dating back to 28 January 1900, when he planned to compose a

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<sup>3</sup> A majority of these operas used librettos written by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Their stories are varied, though some are very intense, like the explicit nature of *Salome* (not surprising considering the librettist was Oscar Wilde). *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Der Rosenkavalier* were both comedies.

<sup>4</sup> I place this in quotations in order to mark that while Morris refers to the work being the bookend for nineteenth century music, it was composed in the twentieth century and elicits what many at the time referred to as a modernist sound. Morris, Christopher. *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains: Music, Opera, Cinema* (England: Ashgate, 2012), 49.

<sup>5</sup> We can assume from the other works that were composed over this period of time like *Feuersnot* (1901), *Sinfonia Domestica* (1903), *Salome* (1905), *Elektra* (1909), *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911), and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912) that Strauss was not continuously working on *Eine Alpensinfonie* and the numerous forms that it assumed over time. It is more plausible that Strauss came back to work on it occasionally while still maintaining creative output.

tone poem called *Der Sonnenaufgang* (The Sunrise).”<sup>6</sup> This first title followed into the compositional process. Strauss had initially conceived of a programmatic piece titled *Eine Künstlertragödie* (An Artist’s Tragedy) in 1900. It closely mirrored the biography for the painter Karl Stauffer-Bern.<sup>7</sup> Karl Stauffer-Bern was a Swiss painter and sculptor during the nineteenth century who is well known for his portraits. His critical acclaim as an artist came to a halt after an affair in Italy caused him to have a nervous breakdown, thus leading to his admission into a hospital for the mentally ill.

This initial conception of the program then transitioned into a Nietzschean narrative. Charles Youmans suggests that it had “obvious parallels with Nietzsche’s essay, *Der Antichrist*: the descent into insanity, seeking wisdom through contemplation at mountain retreats, [and] rejection by a woman he loved.”<sup>8</sup> We next know of further composition from a diary entry by Strauss from 19 May 1911, in which he titled the work *Der Antichrist* (The Antichrist). Alex Ross notes that this change happened after Mahler’s death, an event which deeply affected Strauss. Ross mentions, “Strauss wondered why Mahler, ‘this aspiring, idealistic, and energetic artist,’ had converted to Christianity.”<sup>9</sup> At this point in time, Strauss was strongly anti-religion<sup>10</sup>, and Ross suggests that the title of *Der Antichrist* refers directly back to Strauss’s adoration for Nietzsche and Nietzsche’s essay of the same title. Gilliam has suggested that the opposite is true: Strauss did not use the *Antichrist* essay for his conception of the work, instead drawing

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<sup>6</sup> Gilliam, Bryan, *The Life of Richard Strauss* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 94.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Youmans, *Richard Strauss’s Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 219.

<sup>8</sup> Youmans, *Richard Strauss’s Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism*, 219

<sup>9</sup> Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008), 31.

<sup>10</sup> Strauss commonly commented on how Mahler as a composer was held back by his attachment to Christianity.

inspiration from the natural surroundings of his home in Garmisch-Partenkirchen.<sup>11</sup> The town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen is a small town situated in the Alps in Bavaria. Strauss's house at the time had a view that looked straight at the Zugspitze, Germany's highest peak.

Strauss did speak about *Der Antichrist*, but he was right in the heart of the German Alps and lived among the scenes described within his tone poem. Gilliam's suggestion speaks more directly to the journey of the program. The third version of the program was titled, *Die Alpen*. Charles Youmans described this change as an artist's perception of nature to the point at which it could be used as metaphysical liberation. What this means is that the artist is no longer viewing nature as a part of this earth, but as something which allows them to transcend the life on Earth and explore the vast metaphysical world. This version had four movements with the titles, "Mountain Climb," "Rustic Joy," "Dreams and Ghosts," and "Freedom." Later the piece had a two-movements, divided into the climb up the mountain, retained from the previous version, and "mankind's predilection for error as a seeker of God and metaphysical truth."<sup>12</sup>

When the piece was published in 1915 it had only one-movement that narrated a climb up and down a mountain. Youmans emphasizes that that though it is technically one movement, there are 22 sections that make up the approximately 50-minute work. Each section corresponds to a different pastoral scene of the alpine journey. Strauss opens with a descending B-flat minor scale into *Nacht* (Night), followed by the *Sonnenaufgang* (Sunrise), bursting forth out of darkness, setting the alpine adventure into motion. He then starts the upward climb, *Der Anstieg* (Ascent), continuing to the *Eintritt der Wald* (Entry into the Forest). From there the piece details many distinct natural structures and phenomenon, such as the twinkling string section during the *Am Wasserfall* (At the Waterfall), the traditional pastoral sounds of bleating sheep and chirping

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<sup>11</sup> Bryan Gilliam, *The Life of Richard Strauss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 95.

<sup>12</sup> Youmans, *Richard Strauss's Orchestra Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism*, 221.



birds in the *Auf der Alm* (On the Pastures), and the immense brass climax at *Auf dem Gipfel* (On the Peak).<sup>13</sup> The composition is cyclic in that the work starts during the night, builds up to a sunrise, and ends where it began: with the sun setting and our eventual return to night. Table 2 shows how the piece is organized into 22 sections with their individual titles. These titles assist with the comprehension of the “unwritten” program.<sup>14</sup> Since the piece begins and ends with night, with a sunrise and sunset in between, the piece follows a day and night cycle. Within this cycle, Strauss includes guiding titles, like “Ascent” and “On the Summit”. The titles help listeners picture a journey up and down a mountain, with the peak between the ascent and descent sections. The journey up and down a mountain is a cycle as well, further emphasizing the cyclical nature of this piece. The cycle in relation to the music is explored in chapter two, and, as described, follows closely to the pattern expressed through the program.

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<sup>13</sup> Gilliam, *The Life of Richard Strauss*, 95.

<sup>14</sup> Technically, writing the titles at the top of each section could be considered a written program, but I am referring more to a prose or poetic written program.

Table 2: List of titles throughout the work with English translations.

Nacht	Night
Sonnenaufgang	Sunrise
Der Anstieg	Ascent
Eintritt in den Wald	Entry into the Forest
Wanderung neben dem Bach	Wandering by the Brook
Am Wasserfall	By the Waterfall
Erscheinung	Apparition
Auf blumigen Wiesen	On the flowering Meadows
Auf der Alm	On the Pastures
Durch Dickicht und Gestrüpp auf Irrwegen	Through Thickets and Undergrowth on the Wrong Path
Auf dem Gletscher	On the Glacier
Gefährvolle Augenblicke	Dangerous Moment
Auf dem Gipfel	On the Summit
Vision	Vision
Nebel steigen	Mists Arrive
Die Sonne verdüstert sich allmählich	The Sun Gradually Darkens
Elegie	Elegy
Stille vor dem Sturm	Calm before the Storm
Gewitter und Sturm, Aufstieg	Tempest and Storm, Descent
Sonnenuntergang	Sunset
Ausklang	Echo/ Quiet Settles
Nacht	Night

I am basing my understanding of program music during the *fin-de-siècle* on Jonathan Kregor's recent study, *Program Music*<sup>15</sup>. Kregor's suggests that program music seeks a dialogue with other arts, like poetry, literature, and visual art. The dialogue which he describes calls for the music at hand not only to reference another external art, but to engage with it actively. It represents the art and has the ability to express the emotions created by the one art in the form of music. Program music most often connected with literature, but it was not uncommon for it to approach the other art forms as well<sup>16</sup>. An example of a piece connected with literature is Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, which is based on the writings by the same title by Nietzsche.<sup>17</sup> Many new symphonic genres came out of this dialogue: character pieces, programmatic symphonies, symphonic poems, and tone paintings.<sup>18</sup> In order for a piece of music to be programmatic, Kregor writes that it must have something extrinsic to the music which

<sup>15</sup> Kregor, Jonathan. *Program Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* details musically the paintings that are in a particular gallery. Hugo Wolf was famous for his relationship to Eduard Mörike and wrote a song cycle based on his poems.

<sup>18</sup> Kregor, Jonathan. *Program Music*, 1.

gives the music a deeper meaning, be it “a title, a poem, [or] a person.” I think that his definition suggests that we ask ourselves, as analysts, whether we accept the extrinsic idea that is suggested by the piece or not. If we do accept that this extrinsic idea is fundamental to the piece, then it is our goal to find ways in which to include it in the search for a work’s meaning. One of the centerpieces of programmatic music is its intended ability to represent themes or ideas through musical notation. James Hepokoski writes that:

Essential to the production of programmatic musical scenes is an assumed generic contract between composer and listener whereby musical ideas are agreed to be mappable onto aspects of specific characters or situations: let motives A, B, and C represent narrative-images X, Y, and Z. Without an initial agreement to accept this principle of musical metaphor, the tone-poem premise collapses. To suggest that it might be appropriate to listen to these works as absolute music or that they are adequately comprehensible in terms of pure music alone is to blind oneself to the historically controversial and witty aesthetic game that the tone poems are playing.<sup>19</sup>

Hepokoski outlines the mechanics of program music in relation with the representation of themes within the music to the extrinsic association. This blueprint of program music builds on Kregor’s model in that it suggests it is no longer the responsibility of the listener to form their own interpretation of the program (though one could argue that this phenomenon occurs regardless). Instead the responsibility lies with the composer. He must give agency to the music to direct the listener through the path of the program. Without this direction, the listener is lost and distracted from attempted metaphor.

Following Hepokoski, in order for a piece to be distinguished from absolute music, the music must begin to represent “narrative-images.” One example prior to the nineteenth century is Antonio Vivaldi’s *Le Quattro Stagioni*. The piece was accompanied by a set of sonnets that were possibly written by Vivaldi, and there are many instances of musical representation such as bird

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<sup>19</sup> Hepokoski, James. “The Second Cycle of Tone Poems,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 92.

calls, dogs barking, and a storm.<sup>20</sup> While this is just one example, and there are many that are present much earlier in fifteenth and sixteenth century madrigals, these musical representations are indicative of a programmatic work, but, as the complexity of musical composition developed over the centuries leading through the nineteenth century, so did the detail and intricacy of the programs associated with program music.

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, program music began to develop into what we normally associate with nineteenth century program music, composed by Strauss, Liszt, and Berlioz. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony expanded the possibilities for many new genres of symphonic music. Composers attempted to find new genres to expand on what Beethoven done. Robert Schumann wrote of four new genres that emerged from the "symphonic crisis": Mendelssohn's symphony-cantata, Berlioz's programmatic symphony, Liszt's symphonic poem, and Wagner's music drama.<sup>21</sup><sup>22</sup> As the century continued, new composers with innovative ideas began to expand upon the rapid development of the "symphonic crisis". By the late nineteenth century, Richard Strauss was the prominent figure for programmatic tone poems, which are loosely connected with Liszt's symphonic poems. Gustav Mahler reshaped the symphony with his groundbreaking and expansive symphonies, lasting over an hour and pushing the size of the orchestra to its limits (especially his Eight Symphony, "Symphony for One Thousand."). Richard

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<sup>20</sup> The connection between motivic representations and program music will be further explored in the second chapter, in which I will analyze all of the major motives throughout *Eine Alpensinfonie*.

<sup>21</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> The symphony-cantata was essentially a symphony with a choir added in, similar to the shape defined by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The programmatic symphony is best displayed by his *Symphonie Fantastique*, which has five movements, and each movement describes a scene or an event. This piece is famous for having a written program, which was then removed after it was discovered that the audiences did not need the program notes to follow the narrative. Liszt symphonic poems were the early versions of tone poems and were programmatic, and were focused on one central idea, but were not as effective with narrative compared to the tone poem. Wagner's music drama was his version of the opera, with the boundaries crushed by the length of his works, the intensity of his music, and the intricacy of his composition and narrative.

Wagner continued to redefined the relationship between the symphony and opera with his immense and maximal music dramas. These composers searched for control of the symphonic genre with their diverse compositions. What resulted was a world of potential interpretations of what program music should look and sound like.<sup>23</sup> With this mindset of the nineteenth century, any piece of music connected with an extrinsic idea could be considered program music. Whether that is problematic or not is up to debate. This mindset allows for even the smallest connection with an extrinsic idea could result in a piece of music being categorized as program music, which could be beneficial for the growth of program music as genre. However, what is missing is whether the music uses narrative or it just referencing something outside of music. It does address the fact that program music should connect with something extrinsic to the music, but if the music alludes to something less extravagant, then the piece is somewhat devalued as program music. Over time, the most prized piece of program music employ the use of narrative to bring their pieces to life and tell a story to the audience. Technically both types could be considered program music, though one form is much more strongly revered.

Bryan Gilliam attributes Strauss's fascination with the genre of the tone poem to his close relationship with Alexander Ritter (1833-1896)<sup>24</sup>, who was attached to the music of Wagner and Liszt and had a significant impact on Strauss's compositional approach to narrative through the use of many interrelated themes and motives.<sup>25</sup> Ritter spent a considerable amount of time with Strauss during his period in Meiningen as the court music director from October 1885 through April 1886. Ritter introduced him to the symphonic poems of Liszt and the writings and

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<sup>23</sup> That is, if it is meant to look or sound like anything specific at all.

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Ritter was a violinist and composer from Estonia with whom Strauss met frequently during his time in Meiningen. Ritter took the place of Hans von Bülow, and encouraged Strauss to write his first opera, *Guntram*.

<sup>25</sup> Gilliam, "Strauss, Richard, §2: The tone poet, 1885–98."

compositions of Siegmund von Hausegger (1872-1948)<sup>26</sup>. Before meeting Ritter, Strauss was already deeply entrenched in the study of Richard Wagner's music dramas. At the age of twelve, Strauss had an undying passion for opera and musical theater. He adored of the first performance he attended of *Siegfried* in April 1878. He was amazed by the beauty of the piece (though he writes that it did bore him incredibly) and was persuaded to attend the performance of *Die Walküre* six months later<sup>27</sup>. Strauss reviewed these operatic experiences to his close friend and fellow composer Ludwig Thuille, who was three years older than Strauss. In his letter about *Die Walküre*, Strauss wrote: "I have become a Wagnerian." He praised the beautiful music of Wagner, while at the same time completely dismantling the public opinion of Mozart, writing that, "I don't even comprehend people who can claim a Mozart might be as beautiful, who can go so far as to do harm to their tongue and their gullet by expressing such a thing."<sup>28</sup> This is a very strong statement from Strauss, as there have been many audiences throughout history who regarded Mozart as one of the best (if not the best) musician in history. This is particularly relevant in that Mozart was a revolutionary composer of his time. While he was successful at times in his life, his music soared to the highest critical claim after his death, and paved the way for composers like Beethoven to continue to break through a stagnant musical world.

Thuille was an orphan and was very close with Strauss and his family—to the extent that he was often considered to be part of the Strauss family. However, Thuille was an anti-Wagnerite and more musically conservative (as was Strauss's father Franz), so their relationship could only sustain so much discussion about Wagner.<sup>29</sup> Ritter, on the other hand, was also a

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<sup>26</sup> Hausegger was an Austrian composer and conductor, who wrote a *Natursymphonie* in 1911. Hausegger is the son of the famous music writer, Friedrich von Hausegger.

<sup>27</sup> Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 13.

<sup>28</sup> Gilliam, Bryan. *Richard Strauss and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 213.

<sup>29</sup> Gilliam, Bryan. *Rounding Wagner's Mountain* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 12.

Wagnerian, who focused his teaching and understanding heavily on the philosophy of Wagner's music with particular attention to Schopenhauer. Ritter added to Strauss's understanding and adoration of the elder composer by focusing on the aesthetics and the philosophy of Wagner's music. Ritter's main influence upon Strauss as a composer was to introduce him to Liszt's symphonic poems, which sparked the creation of the tone poem as a response to the symphonies of Brahms.<sup>30</sup> However, this fascination with the tone poem was relatively short, as he only composed them from 1886 to 1915, before opera and Lieder dominated the majority of his compositions. Strauss wanted to sustain the programmatic genre: he considered the symphonic poem as championed by Liszt to be the "music of the future."<sup>31</sup> Strauss's programmatic music has no written programs, only the works' titles and section headings.<sup>32</sup> However, there are still many implied programmatic ideas and stories that fit with the music provided. For example, in *Ein Heldenleben*, the listener is able to track the "life of a hero" as he enters battle and faces adversity; in *Till Eulenspiegel*, we follow a character from German folklore named Till and we hear his adventures as a "trickster," constantly performing practical jokes; in *Sinfonia Domestica*, we gain a third-person aural perspective on domestic life within the household. However, the program of *Eine Alpensinfonie* is highly debated and has a historical background that only confuses the decoding process.

The only written program that Strauss provides for *Eine Alpensinfonie* are the 22 titles for each section of the piece. One major missing element, which is present in most of his other tone poems, is an implied protagonist or central figure. In *Ein Heldenleben*, Strauss included the character directly in the title of the work. *Till Eulenspiegel*'s main character is drawn from a

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<sup>30</sup> Gilliam, Bryan. *Rounding Wagner's Mountain*, 15.

<sup>31</sup> Gilliam, "Strauss Richard, §2: The tone poet, 1885-98."

<sup>32</sup> This is a distinct contrast from the program notes that accompanied Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*

trickster out of Germanic folklore. The character can also be inferred from the title of the composition. *Sinfonia Domestica* describes family life and there are specific themes and motives for the different members of a family. For *Eine Alpensinfonie*, however, there is nothing signifying whether it is a journeyman who makes this trek or if it Strauss himself, writing from the inspiration that he received in his own life. Perhaps the character is that of the *Künstlertragödie*. Since the design of the program changed so frequently and it took nearly fifteen years to complete, it is possible, even likely, that the conception of the character changed over time as well.<sup>33</sup>

Scholars have debated whether *Eine Alpensinfonie* is autobiographical, mirroring Strauss's own experiences, or if it simply is a work depicting natural panoramas. Peter Höyng suggests that *Eine Alpensinfonie*'s program is based off of an alpine experience that Strauss had when he was young. Strauss wrote a letter to his friend Ludwig Thuille on 26 August 1879, which outlines his adventure in the mountains near Stauffel Lake in a town named Murnau, where he was on vacation with his family. Strauss left his house in the middle of the night to join other hikers. They spent five hours hiking in the dark with only a lantern to light their path. Upon daybreak, the climbers reached the Heimgarten summit, "where they were afforded a panorama of various lakes and peaks, including the Zugspitze."<sup>34</sup> The hikers got lost and wandered around for a couple of hours, only to be caught in a storm while descending the mountain. The group finally returned to Murnau the following day. The story that is told in Strauss's letter matches very the *Alpensinfonie*, as indicated by the titles of each section closely. Höyng suggests, "The individual, presumably a male, is one who is allowed to experience an adventurous day in the

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<sup>33</sup> In any case, there is limited evidence supporting these claims.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Höyng, "Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*," in *Heights of Reflection: Mountains in the German Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann (Rochester: Camden House, 2012), 232.



mountains and overcome hindrances so that he can feel in full control of both himself and nature.”<sup>35</sup> Strauss even mentioned at the end of his letter that, “[he] depicted the whole adventure on the piano.... Of course giant tone painting and all that nonsense.”<sup>36</sup> While these factors might indicate a strong connection between this alpine trip and Strauss’s conception of the *Alpensinfonie*, Bayreuther argues against the piano transcription, by highlighting that thirty-five years pass between this letter and the completion of the work, and that the relationship between the two is largely unlikely.<sup>37</sup>

Ernst Krause has also attempted to shape the *Alpensinfonie* as a biographical work, asking, “who but Strauss guides the listener amongst the peaks of the ‘*Alpensinfonie*,’ the panorama of his beloved mountains which could be seen from his Garmisch home?”<sup>38</sup> Krause’s argument is based on multiple suggestions by Strauss. Strauss wrote, “I don’t see why I shouldn’t make a symphony about myself. I find myself quite as interesting as Napoleon or Alexander.”<sup>39</sup> Strauss is also quoted as having asserted, “poetical content is the content of one’s own life.”<sup>40</sup> Such claims add credibility Höyng’s argument, though I would suggest that his evidence—letters by Strauss and his sister—is much more convincing than a few stray quotes that Strauss could have said in any context. There is, for example, the possibility that these quotes were inaccurately attributed to Strauss. In this case, I would trust the letters, written on specific dates and in a particular context, especially with two writers describing the same events. Though the quotations confirm his argument, they would not be able to withstand any critical

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<sup>35</sup> Höyng, “Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss’s *Eine Alpensinfonie*,” 242.

<sup>36</sup> Höyng, “Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss’s *Eine Alpensinfonie*,” 232.

<sup>37</sup> Höyng, “Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss’s *Eine Alpensinfonie*,” 233.

<sup>38</sup> Ernst Krause, *Richard Strauss: The Man and His Work* (Boston: Crescendo, 1969), 75.

<sup>39</sup> Krause, *Richard Strauss: The Man and His Work*, 75.

<sup>40</sup> Krause, *Richard Strauss: The Man and His Work*, 75.

analysis, especially considering they are most likely taken out of context. Without an explicit program for the work, we can maintain the possibility that Strauss could have conceived of the piece autobiographically. The hike was, as he himself described it, “interesting, special, and original to the highest degree.”<sup>41</sup>

I struggle to hear and understand this piece as biographical. Strauss’s quotations extracted by Krause are weak evidence. Höyng’s argument is more consistent: there is a stronger connection between this evidence in letters and biography, but the issue with this evidence is historical distance. As Bayreuther stated in his analysis, over 35 years passed between the date of the letter and the work’s completion. While the letter’s highly detailed account parallels the final form of the program. However, Strauss was surrounded by mountains for most of the second half of his career in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and could have been influenced closer to the date of publication. The town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen is a very small town situated in the heart of the German alps in Southern Germany. In 1908 Strauss built a villa in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, and because of its proximity to the Zugspitze, the highest mountain in Germany, one could try to create the connection between his physical surroundings and his composition of *Eine Alpensinfonie*.<sup>42</sup>

Could it be that the *Alpensinfonie* has no central figure? While many of Strauss’s other tone poems have included characters, or suggest that a figure in some form is implied, *Alpensinfonie* lacks any evidence in the score that suggests a journeyman, hiker, or even Strauss himself. In contrast, the main themes that are presented throughout the work allude to natural phenomena and the many titles also rarely mention any human involvement, save the section

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<sup>41</sup> Höyng, “Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss’s *Eine Alpensinfonie*,” 232.

<sup>42</sup> The dates of when the villa was constructed match up well enough with the publication to potentially create a connection, though this has not been documented.

titled, “The Climb,” and “The Descent,” which indicate movement. However, these few sections are outnumbered by music that represents nature and natural events such as a storm, waterfall, sunrise, and sunset.

In contrast with the previous claims, I understand *Eine Alpensinfonie* program to be focused on the natural objects and events of the alpine landscape, with the absence of a main character. Rather than trying to place this work within the same context as Strauss’s other tone poems, I compare it to works such as Beethoven’s *Pastoral* Symphony or Sibelius’s Fifth Symphony. These symphonies are both centered around nature, and the *Pastoral* Symphony contains similar narrative material: the fourth movement is titled “*Gewitter, Sturm*” (Thunder, Storm), and birdcalls occur at the end of the second movement.

Krause would disagree with me. He writes, “This is no musical work of Beethovenian feeling for nature...any comparison with the ‘Pastoral Symphony’ is misleading.”<sup>43</sup> I think what Krause is aiming at in this statement is that the two share a nature connection, but *Eine Alpensinfonie*’s conception of the natural world is different from the *Pastoral*. Krause argues for the separation of the two. I think it is okay to keep the pieces separate in some instances, especially considering the *Pastoral* Symphony and *Alpensinfonie* are separated by over 100 years. However, there are multiple parallels between the piece, such as the pastoral imagery, various bird calls, and the storm scene that is present in both. The first movement of the Sixth Symphony, though soft and gentle, contains a melody that is simple, in a major key, relies heavily on the harmonies of the fourth and fifth, and matches that of the Pastoral theme in *Eine Alpensinfonie*, with its simple descending scale, followed by step-wise motion throughout the winds and strings, found in the “Auf der Alm” section. In contrast, the Scene by the Brook from the *Pastoral* Symphony and the Wandering by the Brook from *Eine Alpensinfonie* are less

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<sup>43</sup> Krause, *Richard Strauss: The Man and His Work*, 256.

similar. The selection from Beethoven showcases three distinct bird calls, while Strauss's selection mimics the sound of a stream running by. The comparison for the Scene by the Brook actually comes in the On the Pasture section, where Strauss imitates numerous animal sounds with bleating sheep and ringing cowbells. The storm sections located in both symphonies compare closely, with the strings swirling up and down scales while the brass play intermittently, heightening the unsettledness and frantic nature of this scene. One major difference is that Strauss used a thunder machine and wind machine—unavailable to Beethoven, as these instruments had not been invented. These two instruments were originally invented for the purpose of adding sound effects to staged performances (plays, theater). Recognizing their ability to reproduce these natural sounds extremely well, Strauss implemented them in his orchestration: their first appearance with an orchestra. Another difference is compositional style. Following Wagner, Strauss used a variety of short themes and motives that, during the storm scene, are played on top of each other and varied. Beethoven wrote longer melodic passages that developed over the course of each movement.

The connections that exist between the two are compelling, both programmatically and musically. In addition to my arguments, there are a range of interpretations of the *Pastoral* Symphony that could lead to comparisons with the *Alpensinfonie*. One could approach the *Pastoral* in the same way that Höyng approaches the *Alpensinfonie* and view the symphony as a series of events that are experienced by a character or figure. Höyng suggests how the Sixth Symphony might take shape, saying “the subject revels in cheerful sentiments when arriving in the countryside by coach (first movement), taking a walk along a brook (second movement), envisions a ‘happy gathering’ and dance among country folk (third movement), encounters a thunderstorm (fourth movement), and thereafter hears a shepherd’s song, savoring the peaceful

scenery (fifth movement).”<sup>44</sup> Heard this way, the *Alpensinfonie* and the *Pastoral Symphony* are similar, with the exception of the explicit programmatic content.

Focusing on the *Alpensinfonie*, removing a protagonist prompts a new interpretation. We go from following a hiker’s adventures through the Alps and the many natural phenomena that they encounter along their journey to a collection of vignettes that show the natural phenomena without human interaction. The second perspective is pictorial, similar to a collection of photographs of the Alps organized in such a way that the paintings show a timeline of events. Strauss uses these separate pastoral scenes to create a musical landscape of the Alps. The landscape is meant to transport the listener to the alpine world, which further elucidates his programmatic ideas. Paired with the transportation is the emotions and events that take place within the landscape. We hear woodwinds imitating sheep and birds in stereotypical pastoral scenes (measure numbers for all of the following points of description). A horn-call is heard in the distance. The rustling of strings and percussion immerse the listener deep within a storm, followed by the strings imitating the sun bursting forth from the clouds once more to show the end to the adventure on the mountain. The development of a musical landscape is crucial the program, as is dependent on a set of pastoral scenes from the Alps. The listener can experience the landscape aurally and operate within it, as the music guides the listener from one musical photograph to the next.

If Strauss intended for there to be a central figure or character in the *Alpensinfonie*, it would be located at the genesis of the work’s composition. When conceived in 1899, the *Alpensinfonie* was originally centered around a *Künstlertragödie* (An Artist’s Tragedy), which

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<sup>44</sup> Höyng, “Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss’s *Eine Alpensinfonie*,” 234.

was inspired by the paintings of the Swiss painter, Karl Stauffer, mentioned above.<sup>45</sup> Stauffer could be the figure that Strauss imagined in his *Alpensinfonie*: he was a well-accomplished hiker, and he wrote that, for him, climbing mountains had a “psycho-hygienic function,” which is similar to the way that Strauss felt about climbing mountains and being in nature. Stauffer had strong ties with the Alps and his birthplace was right in the middle of them. Strauss takes advantage of this location and makes Stauffer’s birthplace the centerpiece for his descriptions that are used for the program. Strauss wrote, “After everything has been lighted and saturated by mild warmth, the small house where ‘the artist was born’ becomes visible.”<sup>46</sup> Writing here again on the *Künstlertragödie*, Strauss centered the program around Stauffer’s prosperous and turbulent life, as shown in the sketches for the work. On the back of the sketchbook, Strauss wrote, “Liebestragödie eines Künstlers – dem Andenken Karl Stauffers” (Love tragedy of an artist – in memory of Karl Stauffer).<sup>47</sup> In other words, perhaps Strauss imagined early versions of *Alpensinfonie* in the context of the biography of Karl Stauffer, allowing another possible central figure of the program. In any regard, this evidence is only reliable to the point at which Strauss decided to shift the program away from the *Künstlertragödie* and towards the Alps-centered program. After that point, the piece shifts its entire focus from anything that could be related to a biography towards a more natural program, taking place in the alpine landscape. The biographical relationship is broken, thus rendering this evidence useful to our understanding of how the piece took shape over time and the background of the program’s conception, but not directly helpful with the final publication.

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<sup>45</sup> Höyng, “Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss’s *Eine Alpensinfonie*,” 234.

<sup>46</sup> Höyng, “Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss’s *Eine Alpensinfonie*,” 236.

<sup>47</sup> Höyng, “Leaving the Summit Behind: Tracking Biographical and Philosophical Pathways in Richard Strauss’s *Eine Alpensinfonie*,” 234.

This discussion surrounding the presence of a central character within *Eine Alpensinfonie* allows the possibility for musical narrative to be included into our understanding of the program. Musical narrative, as understood by Jean-Jacques Nattiez, is flexible and subjective to the individual. The narrative is written each individual audience member and their own personal interaction with the music that they are hearing.<sup>48</sup> While this does not rely on evidence to discover the program to *Eine Alpensinfonie*, it plays into how we interpret all of the evidence that has been discovered. Musical narrative and a program are separate entities, considering that programs are inferred by the composer and narratives are created by the audience. But, they are related in accordance with our comparison of the two. For example, the scholars provide their evidence for their individual understanding of *Eine Alpensinfonie* in accordance to the other evidence provided, and I provide my own musical narrative based on what I have read and heard.

I have previously examined the elements of the program which contribute to our understanding of *Eine Alpensinfonie*, but it is important to go through the same process following the guidelines provided by Nattiez. Nattiez described musical narrative and how it is comprised of not only plot and story, but also an act or actions to create motion in the narrative.<sup>49</sup> According to Nattiez, there are two requisites in order to narrative to be established in music: a minimum of two objects must be presented, regardless if it is living or inanimate, and the objects must be presented in a linear and temporal manner to encourage the audience to create a relationship between them.<sup>50</sup> In the case of *Eine Alpensinfonie*, even though that I decided that there was not a central character in the final version of this piece, there are still objects and elements within it that allow for the narrative to exist. My understanding of the program removes

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<sup>48</sup> Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Can one speak of narrativity in Music?" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 115, no. 2 (1990), 246.

<sup>49</sup> Nattiez, "Can one speak of narrativity in Music?", 243.

<sup>50</sup> Nattiez, "Can one speak of narrativity in Music?", 246.

the human element from the piece, but that does not limit its ability to have musical narrative. *Eine Alpensinfonie* contains many different “objects” which fit Nattiez’s first requirement for narrative. The mountain, the sun, the pasture filled with different animals, the storm, and the waterfall are just a few examples of the objects that *Eine Alpensinfonie* has to offer. The objects within the piece are related in a linear fashion, especially considering the cyclical nature of the music. The piece begins and ends at night, and the music at both ends is similar: a descending B-flat minor scale that cascades through the woodwinds and strings. At the beginning of the piece, the sun rises from the darkness, establishing the time of day. The sun then sets to bring the day to a close. Given the title of the piece, the audience can assume that the music will contain a mountainous landscape in some form. Included in this is the mountain, which acts as the focal point of the work and which many objects are derived from. The mountain is centrally located in the music, with the peak of the mountain falling almost exactly in the middle. The pasture in the first half of the piece contains numerous animals, relating to the alpine landscape. There are cowbells off in the distance and birds sing their melodies as the journey progresses from the base of the mountain through the foothills where the cattle graze and wildlife is abundant. After the magnificent arrival at the summit, the alpine world is obscured by fog and clouds, as the piece prepares for the arrival of the storm. Within in the storm, the wind and thunder excite the music until the sun reappears and pushes back the clouds and fog to reveal the sunset. The piece resembles a timeline of an alpine experience over the course of one day. This evocation of temporality and linear motion in *Eine Alpensinfonie* fulfills Nattiez’s second requirement for the foundation of musical narrative. The relationship between the different objects, represented by the themes within the piece, is explore more in depth in the second chapter, but they all relate to one another to create a clear alpine landscape. Combined with the 22 descriptive titles and the



temporality of the program, Strauss allows for a well-created musical narrative to develop within the audience. These ideas behind musical narrative add to the strength of this piece within the context of other works during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It further emphasizes its great detail and vivid descriptions and credits the structure of the piece and how it specifically relates to the narrative and program as a whole.

The evidence provided by these scholars is substantial and it not to be ignored, especially given the open discourse surrounding the program of *Eine Alpensinfonie*. All of the claims made by each of the scholars are plausible, though it is important to recognize the limitations of each of the claims in relation to the final composition. The letters and statements from Strauss and his family members indicate a possible autobiographical composition following 1879, mainly focusing on his alpine experiences in his youth. These letters were strikingly similar to the titles of the piece, but the time elapsed from these letters and the final composition is long enough to cause skepticism over their relationship. The connection with Karl Stauffer indicates a biographical relationship, that he could be the figure guiding the journey. However, that version of *Eine Alpensinfonie* long predates the finalized version. A fifteen-year gestation period provides a lot of room for change, as we can see from Strauss changing the title four times. Based on this, the title is a good place to start looking for immediate clues as to if this work could be biographical.

Consider the natural side of the program of the *Alpensinfonie* in the context of the cultural importance of mountains in Germany. During this period, there was the *Heimat* (homeland, or native land) movement, in which there was an increased stress on the individual and cultivation of one's being.<sup>51</sup> The natural connection with the *Heimat* movement existed

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<sup>51</sup> Christopher Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains: Music, Opera, Cinema* (England: Ashgate, 2012), 15.

through the *Wandervogel Gesellschaft* (The Wanderers Society). This society was dedicated to reestablishing the love of nature among youths, though its outreach extended across the German society as a whole. Mountains were their “nature of choice” for walking and hiking, an important context for Strauss’s work. In addition to focusing on nature, the society had an “emphasis both within alpinism and the youth movement on healthy living and the ‘return to nature’.” They wanted the people to leave the cities and to branch out into the countryside and explore the beauty and glory of the nature that is around them, especially considering that the southern part of Germany is home to some of the Alps. Christopher Morris suggests the, “‘return to nature’ was rooted in late nineteenth-century German and Swiss reformist attitudes to perceived cultural decline and decadence.” It shows that it was a desirable shift and that one might even say that it was a necessary one in order to sustain a strong culture or to revive a culture that abandoned the mountain vistas. This movement was also sustained by the expansion of the railway system throughout the Alps, which made trips, like the one Strauss made in 1879, much more accessible and realistic.<sup>52</sup> This opened up enormous possibilities for the urban middle class. All of a sudden with this increased interest in being in the Alps and the availability of travel to these locations, the arts community responded, turning to a variety of media in which to portray the new obsession. This symphony is a good example of the arts drawing the connection to the Alps. Shortly after the end of World War One, many film directors turned their attention to making art in the Alpine vistas the German population so strongly sought out.

Strauss was an early adopter of the *Heimat* movement, and many critics of his *Alpensinfonie* were progressive in their reviews, noting terms and drawing connections that were sometimes fantastical and beyond the times. Richard Specht wrote in???, stating that the

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<sup>52</sup> Simmel, George. “An Alpine Journey,” 95-96.

*Alpensinfonie* is regarded as “*Kinomusik*,” (movie music).<sup>53</sup> Cinema flourished in the 1920s, and the categorizing it as cinema music speaks to the way which listeners could have been hearing the symphony, though there is a sense that the quotation is slightly derogatory in its use. The quote by Specht could lead one to associate a motion picture with the music and the music matching the picture being shown on the screen.

An interesting contemporary setting of *Eine Alpensinfonie* comes from Tobias Melle and his *Sinfonie in Bildern* (Symphony in images, DATE?). Melle is a musician and a photographer who synchronizes symphonies with pictures displayed while the orchestra is performing. The pictures are still and taken with modern equipment in recent years. Perhaps they take away the guess work by the listener and provide images with the audio underneath in order to supplement the imagination. This intriguing project by Melle, even because of its restriction on the program, is a glimpse into what Specht might have meant when he called Strauss’s work cinema music, with its vivid imitation and imagery of the Bavarian Alps. Melle’s work and Specht’s quotation provide another perspective from the pictorial view. One could regard this piece as potentially a “tourist” symphony: a lure for city dwellers, heard in a concert hall in Berlin only to inspire future alpine excursions. Thus, they might have raced off to the trains with the rest of the German population. It depicts many natural phenomena with strong realism down to the bleating of sheep and the cowbells by in the scene by the pasture, the whipping winds of the storm, the glistening drops of the nearby waterfall, and the numerous hunting calls provided by offstage brass, as if a local group of huntsmen were preparing to take on the wildlife.

Confirming the exact program of *Eine Alpensinfonie* is approaching the impossible, as there is not enough evidence to make any definitive claims, but there have been many attempts to pin down a potential original story. As I have suggested, the claim that Strauss composed *Eine*

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<sup>53</sup> Morris, *Modernism and the Cult of Mountains: Music, Opera, Cinema*, 50.

*Alpensinfonie* as an autobiographical/biographical work is possible, but there is nothing within the music itself that would support it. The only strong evidence for the biographical argument is the dedication to Karl Stauffer that was written on the back of a sketchbook. However, this was from an early version of the composition, and since there was fifteen years between the start and the finish of the work, the possibility for it to change over time is relatively high (especially considering that Strauss was not working on the composition for 15 years consecutively). The autobiographical claim Peter Höyng makes is at first convincing, considering the anecdotal experience that Strauss had when he was fifteen years old and transcribed his hike at the piano. But even this event struggles to reconcile the time gap, considering that Strauss embarked on this alpine hike in 1879, many years before even the genesis of the conception of *Eine Alpensinfonie*. Although shared by others, my claim about the natural origins of the program, based within the context of German cultural traditions and the natural inclinations of the population, fits well within the structure and design of the composition. With the numerous form and title changes, the work shifted from potentially a biographical work into a philosophical one as Strauss edited. I hear the final work as based centrally within nature. No longer was Strauss working with his own experiences or creating a memoir, but responding to, and potentially exploiting, the trend of the German people's attraction to the Alps.

In the following chapter, I will explore the topics and themes that exist in *Eine Alpensinfonie*, working primarily with a close analysis of the musical material. While I have discussed that there can be many different interpretations of the narrative and program of *Eine Alpensinfonie*, for the sake of this paper, I am going to relate all of my examples back to the narrative which I have picked out from the tone poem's titles and outlined above. Through thorough examination of themes and motives located throughout *Eine Alpensinfonie*, I will

attempt to substantiate my claims of the lack of a central character and to further assert the natural focus that lives within the work.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Music and Meaning: Topics and Representation within *Eine Alpensinfonie*

Depicting and representing events, natural themes, and emotional sentiments was a cornerstone of program music in the nineteenth century. The literary component of programmatic music, whether a collection of poems, a set of correspondence, or a paragraph of prose text, is very important, but its effectiveness is limited by the representation within the composition. As Heinrich Christoph Koch defined program music in the *Musikalisches Lexikon* (1802):

A category of music, which remains little explored, whereby the composer sets for himself the goal of representing or depicting by tone painting alone certain historical events without the assistance of the poetic arts....for this genre to be afforded due respect, however, the question must first be answered: whether it is within the limits of music to represent historical topics, or at the very least, to what extent a historical event can serve as the basis for expressing musical sentiments without the assistance of the poetic arts.<sup>54</sup>

For program music to be successful, the two components of an extrinsic, poetic idea, and the depiction and representation of this idea, must coexist and work with one another to produce the desired reaction. From a musical perspective, I consider these representations and depictions in the context of musical topics. Musical topics are “literal and associative, a gateway through which music expresses and creates meaning.”<sup>55</sup> One definition of musical topics comes from Leonard G. Ratner, where he writes that topics are simply “subjects for musical discourse.”<sup>56</sup> Topics take shape in variety of different ideas and styles, each of which has its own meaning in relation with the music. Since topics can indicate more than direct representation, they are deployed across a wide range of musical genres, but it is especially prevalent in programmatic music.

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<sup>54</sup> Koch, Heinrich Christoph. *Musikalisches Lexikon*. Frankfurt am Main: August Hermann, 1802, 1384-5.

<sup>55</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 9.

<sup>56</sup> Ratner, Leonard G. *Classical Music: Expression, Form, and Style*. New York: Schirmer, 1980, 9.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a frequent topic was the heavy dotted eight-sixteenth note rhythms and a two-part structure that indicated the “French Overture.” In this case, the notes themselves do not mimic an abstract referent. Instead the distinct rhythm draws attention and is the indicator of the French Overture. The “Sturm und Drang” topic is commonly used to indicate uncertainty, emphasized by a minor key area, wild melodic contours, and dramatic and sudden changes in dynamics, pitch, tempo, and style, such as Haydn’s Symphony no. 39, *Tempesta di mare*. The pastoral topic is representative of the melancholic countryside and the pasture. It entails horns and woodwinds, with linear and smooth melodies revolving around harmonies of a fourth or fifth. These are just a few examples of topics and how they relate to a music’s effect, but there are many more, and operate in numerous musical and extra-musical functions.

Richard Strauss’s *Eine Alpensinfonie* can be approached through the lens of topics and representation. *Eine Alpensinfonie* is a pervasively descriptive, vivid, and imitative piece of music, a kind of expansion on earlier imitation of nature by Beethoven, Liszt, and Sibelius. Some might argue that the listener *should* not need a written program of any kind in order to follow a suggested narrative. However, in conjunction with the titles, Strauss’s composition contains highly imitative and descriptive music. As I will show by breaking down each section of the symphony into themes and motives: Strauss does not provide much space for multiple interpretations of the narrative, even though, as I have showed in the first chapter, there are many possible protagonists and frameworks.

Kofi Agawu has written extensively on the subject of musical meaning, especially with reference to its perception by the audience. He writes that, “Indeed it would be a profoundly sad occasion if our ideologies became aligned in such a way that they produced identical narratives?”

about musical works.”<sup>57</sup> This quotation explicitly comments on the meaning that is received from the music by the listener. As I have stated earlier, in the context of this historical moment, the music and the program ought to cooperate with one another in order to produce an effective piece of program music. Even with a range of interpretations, especially in the case of *Eine Alpensinfonie*, the music needs to guide the listener’s thoughts in a way that they can form a cohesive narrative. Agawu writes that for a listener to understand the piece of program music at hand, the listener must be able to compose a narrative that works consistently for their interpretation of the music. He writes, “The idea that music has the capability to narrate or to embody a narrative, or that we can impose a narrative account on the collective events of a musical composition, speaks not only to an intrinsic aspect of temporal structuring, but to a basic human need to understand succession coherently.”<sup>58</sup> What Agawu writes applies to our hearings of program music, but also more broadly. We give narrative to music that we listen to because we have a desire to make sense of what we are hearing.

Jonathan Kregor similarly writes that matching topics with direct meaning “limits their discursive freedom and their interpretive potential.”<sup>59</sup> Certain topics are used describe or imitate events and objects, such as the hunting call or the pastoral. Kregor builds on Agawu’s discussion of musical topics, and they both agree that topics should not be limited to fixed interpretations. I think it is productive to take the ideas of both Kregor and Agawu and combine them in order to gain a complete understanding of how program music works and how the narrative and program is framed through the use of topic theory. Kregor discusses topics as he defines program music, and implicitly relates the two, which, in my interpretation, makes topics part of the foundation of

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<sup>57</sup> Kofi Awagu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 4.

<sup>58</sup> Agawu, *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music*, 102.

<sup>59</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 9.



program music. Agawu, focusing mostly on topics, gives us a clearer understanding of the topics that Kregor is describing and how each of the topics relate to one another to give the music meaning, and for this case, how it operates within a piece of program music. As I explained in the first chapter, the narrative for program music is vital. The composer's challenge is to compose in a way that would elicit a specific reaction and let listeners imagine their own interpretation of the music and narrative. Avoiding a specific idea for each topic is beneficial to how we perceive different musical ideas. Some could argue that if a topic or theme is interpreted in many different ways, how can it be given the title that so many scholars tend to do? At a certain point, it would be illogical for one to hear the pastoral topic during a Sturm und drang topic. This example, though extreme, shows that when we allow for discussion to be free, there is the potential for a lack of consensus on the narrative. This is problematic for program music, in which one of the main goals is to express a unified narrative and theme throughout the whole piece.

Plot is not always the goal of program music and topic-saturated music, but rather is something that results most often from an audience attempting to understand the piece of music. Kofi Agawu has written extensively on the ideas of music, meaning, and topic theory. Agawu weighs in on the discussion of topics and how drawing out plot from topics or character pieces results in

sheer indulgence: [plots] are the historically minded analysts' engagement with one aspect of a work's possible meaning... Topics then are points of departure, but never "total identities." In the fictional context of a work's "total identity," even their most explicit presentation remains on the allusive level. They are therefore suggestive, but not exhaustive.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Agawu, Kofi. *Playing with Signs: a semiotic interpretation of classical? music*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, 34

Even though Agawu is writing mostly on 18<sup>th</sup> century style in this book and how topics and plots interact within these compositions, the concept could still apply music written later in history. This idea of limitless topics and not restricting a work's "total identity" places a great responsibility on the composer to not have their audience perceive something that limits their musical experience, such as a plot. Plots are easy for listeners and historically-minded analysts to shape, because they allow this audience to make sense of the work as a whole. From this plot, the analysts use topics as a way to flesh out their own narrative. Each listener or analyst might not perceive the same plot, so the topics and how they relate to the individual plots can differ in meaning. Some composers, aware that their audience may not perceive the program explicitly conceived for the music, might attempt to imitate the images and compose topics that follow their program as closely as possible.

Agawu's palate of topic interest shifted in one of his later books where he explores 19<sup>th</sup> century topics and their role in comparison to topics from earlier in music history. In his book *Music as Discourse*, Agawu attempts to reconfigure the topics that shaped and structured 18<sup>th</sup> century music into a 19<sup>th</sup> century context. In this text, Agawu writes that rather than separating the topics from the two centuries, there is a certain amount of continuity between them that allows certain topics to be reimaged in a more contemporary context.<sup>61</sup> However, it is problematic to assume that this relationship is straightforward and uninhibited by history. The social context shifted so much that examples from the 18<sup>th</sup> century did not work for topics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One example of a topic whose context changed over time was the march topic. Julian Horton writes in an article from *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* about the different styles and meanings of the march through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. He compares the marches from Haydn's *Military Symphony*, with a distinctly militaristic fanfare, including marching

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<sup>61</sup> Agawu, *Music as Discourse*, 42.

percussion and trumpets, to the fifth movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, which has its own more triumphant fanfare at the beginning with bright trumpets and percussion. This is then compared to the fourth movement of Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, which breaks rank from the march tradition and establishes an open interpretation of the march as one that could be someone marching to their death at the scaffold.<sup>62</sup> Haydn used the march in a more traditional manner, keeping it within the militaristic traditions and maintaining the military sound and stereotypical instrumentation. Beethoven initiated the move away from the military, but kept the traditional timbral quality. Berlioz removed the traditional qualities from the march altogether and replaced it with a new sound and new meaning.

As I will show later on in my analysis, we can no longer use antiquated 18<sup>th</sup> century topics to understand *Eine Alpensinfonie* and its 20<sup>th</sup> century complexities. In order to understand this piece via topics, we have to refocus them into the social and historical context of 1915. The march does not carry with it the militaristic connotations, but is open to a free interpretation, which could include the funeral march from Gustav Mahler's First Symphony. In the context of *Eine Alpensinfonie*, we can revisit the pastoral topic as well as the horn calls and hunting fanfare, and potentially ask whether the storm in the second half of the piece falls under the Strum und drang topic in the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century context.<sup>63</sup> In a closer comparison Agawu shows the lexicon of topics from Marta Grabocz and her Mahler topics. From this close comparison, we can use the horn call, the bird call, nature theme, pastoral, and the fanfare.<sup>64</sup> These topics are specifically meant for Mahler and his symphonies and Lieder, though Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie* is not too far removed from Mahler's era to use similar concepts. The comparison with Mahler is clear,

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<sup>62</sup> Julian Horton, "Listening to Topics in the Nineteenth Century," *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, New York: 2014, 242.

<sup>63</sup> Agawu, *Music as Discourse*, 43-44.

<sup>64</sup> Agawu, *Music as Discourse*, 47.

though Grabocz's lexicon for Bartok's orchestral pieces appear to match more frequently than expected. Her list contains three different forms of nature topics: calm, friendly and radiant, hostile and menacing, and nocturnal. Each of these three nature topics have a specific melodic or harmonic signifier which allows for identification. For example, the hostile and menacing topic is identified by its minor harmonies and use of the chromatic scale. This topic pairs up very well with the hostile and menacing Storm section in *Eine Alpensinfonie*, with its continuous minor chords in the brass, underpinned by chromatic lines in the strings imitating the sound of the wind. Another direct comparison that exists between Bartok and Strauss is the elegy topic. The elegy topic, as used by Bartok, is identified through its "static or passive atmosphere." In *Eine Alpensinfonie*, there is a section titled Elegy, which is one of the most stagnant sections in the whole work, considering its limited harmonic shifts and simple melody. Grabocz's topic lexicon for Bartok matches extremely well with Strauss's use of topics, particularly within *Eine Alpensinfonie*.<sup>65</sup>

Before I can begin to explore the relationship of the themes within *Eine Alpensinfonie* and how they can compare with the topics as described by Grabocz in the context of Mahler and Bartok, it is important to discuss the role of imitation and representation in this piece. Imitation and representation are two musical styles that greatly impact our perception of this piece. It transforms the music from being absolute into being vivid, colorful, and descriptive. Three influential composers and writers from this period explained their understanding of imitation and representation in music. Robert Schumann outlined an open description of his ideal program music, writing that program music should avoid a prose program if at all possible.<sup>66</sup> However, Schumann does allow for references to extra-musical ideas and poetical content. As a result, I

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<sup>65</sup> Agawu, *Music as Discourse*, 49.

<sup>66</sup> Schumann, Robert. *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*. Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1854, III:17.

think that Schumann creates a certain level of respect for the individual interpretations of the music. Hector Berlioz also wrote about direct imitation and the advantages and disadvantages from using this technique, especially as it relates to natural subjects. He writes that this vivid imagery that results from imitation of natural themes is possible, but it should be limited, because music works best as a metaphor. Berlioz writes that music should not be focused so much on imitation, but its own expressiveness and to what extent it conveys emotion and passion.

Berlioz wrote a collection of news articles in the French music journal, *Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* that were on Beethoven's symphonies. In these articles, Berlioz thoroughly examines the symphonies for all of their musical passages and themes, then transitions to discussing how all of these individual parts interact in an expressive manner.<sup>67</sup> He regards the *Pastoral* Symphony very highly because it contains, "the most powerful of all forms of imitation – the one that reproduces the emotions and passions: expressiveness."<sup>68</sup> Within the article on the symphony, Berlioz writes, "One would far rather sleep, sleep for months, and in one's dreams keep living in the unknown realm that a genius has allowed us to glimpse."<sup>69</sup> Even though Berlioz is speaking at this juncture on expressiveness and its relationship to imitation, he weighs in on direct imitation, especially of nature, in an article that he wrote prior to the *Pastoral* Symphony review titled, "On Imitation in Music." In this article, Berlioz does not necessarily support using direct imitation frequently, though he suggests that, while limited, it can help the music achieve a desired sound or to strengthen the scene or emotion it is trying to convey. He argues against Giuseppe Carpani, who had argued for music's ability to imitate looking at

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<sup>67</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 82.

<sup>68</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 83.

<sup>69</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 83.

Haydn's *Creation*.<sup>70</sup> Instead believing that music has the ability to paint images, Berlioz asserts that the imitation in music "act[s] upon the imagination in such a way as to engender sensations analogous to those produced by graphic art."<sup>71</sup> For Berlioz, direct, natural imitation must be "a means to heighten 'music's independent power,' is worth one's attention, cannot be misinterpreted by the listener, [and can] never substitute for emotional imitation."<sup>72</sup>

The other argument of musical representation comes from Eduard Hanslick, who wrote the treatise *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (On Musical Beauty). Hanslick's understanding of musical expression has much less to do with emotion. He places the responsibility of emotional understanding upon the listener, as it is a subjective feeling and is not felt the same from one listener to the next. Hanslick writes, "Music can whisper, storm, roar, but love or anger can only exist subjectively inside of us. This representation of feelings and emotions is not within music's purview."<sup>73</sup> Hanslick also writes on a similar topic to Berlioz's understanding of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. Although, instead of praising the level of expressive imitation present in the work, he criticized the work because of the descriptive titles for each movement. He wrote that, "We must exclude compositions with specific titles or programs that relate to the 'content' of the music...the unification of music with poetry expands its power, but not its limits."<sup>74</sup> Hanslick was not fond of the ability for music to create emotion, unlike Berlioz, who thought the opposite of Hanslick. Hanslick believed that imitation in music was possible and that it referenced extrinsic material and ideas, while Berlioz thought that imagination did the work, while the topics and motives were more responsible for creating expression.

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<sup>70</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 83.

<sup>71</sup> Berlioz, Hector. "On Imitation in Music," (New York: W.W. Norton), 37.

<sup>72</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 83.

<sup>73</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 137.

<sup>74</sup> Kregor, *Program Music*, 137-138.

In addition to constructing a narrative, Strauss also had to work with the concept of the alpine landscape when composing *Eine Alpensinfonie*. However, discussions on landscape and understanding how to musically approach landscape is a relatively new topic for musicology. In the introduction of the Winter 2016 issue of *The Journal of Musicology*, the authors write that, “of all the geographical terms available to music studies, landscape is at once the most obvious and the most obscure.”<sup>75</sup> There are two different interpretations of landscape provided by the authors, and both apply to the multi-faceted *Eine Alpensinfonie*. In one sense, landscape refers more simply to an image, such as a countryside or city streets. Additionally, it relates objects and their representations. I briefly touched on the idea of the musical landscape in the first chapter, but for a piece that is so deeply entrenched with the ideas of nature and the Alpine experience, the musical landscape and the way that the music operates within the landscape is valuable to both the composer and how accurately they are able to match the landscape with the music, and to the listener who is meant to hear the music in such a way that they make a connection between the music and the landscape. *Eine Alpensinfonie* constantly engages with the musical landscape of the piece, as the music interacts with the many different scenes within.

The vivid natural themes that Strauss composes for each of the 22 sections paint the picture of their titles. From the onomatopoeic sounds in the woodwinds and percussion instruments, the shape of the melody lines, and the tonal areas, Strauss utilizes a diverse range of techniques in order to convey a strong narrative to the listener.

The symphony is organized by an array of themes and motives that outline the program and the landscape. This is similar to the way that Wagner composed his music dramas using *Leitmotifs*, which were recurring thematic passages in a piece of music, which could represent characters, a situation, an idea, or an emotion. His *Leitmotifs* covered many different subjects,

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<sup>75</sup> Hicks, et al, *Introduction: Music and Landscape*, 1.

like Love, Valhalla, the Spear, and motifs for each of the scenes and characters in Wagner's music dramas.

Strauss guides his listener through alpine scenes with a number of colorful melodies that represent and imitate the surrounding emotions, objects, and scenes, very similar to the *Leitmotifs* of Wagner. Strauss never considered his compositions to be driven by *Leitmotifs*, but the way he organizes his music and his adoration and deep knowledge and interest of Wagner and his music draws the two compositional techniques closer. Wagner used these *Leitmotifs* to express their intended meaning, but this meaning could be changed slightly with a modification of their tonality or rhythm. In a similar manner, Strauss manipulates a handful of themes in order to shape the program. For example, Strauss inverts the Ascent theme, turning it into a descent. The inversion of the sunrise theme then becomes a sunset. The piece contains a rather compact number of themes, but complexity emerges through their modification and abstraction, which guides the program and paints the landscape in the listener's mind. In each section many different themes appear and interact with each other to create the landscape of that particular scene. The final product is a symphonic work that glides from scene to scene via the variations of themes to connect the landscapes in order to form the big picture of the alpine world that Strauss has recreated in this piece.

In what follows, I organize the themes and motives of the piece in a hierarchical structure of the main themes, their sub-themes, and variants in each section. The main themes are in the first tier of the hierarchy. They represent the central melodies that choreograph the alpine landscape and the events within it. The second tier of themes contains the variations of tier one, many of which reoccur throughout the piece. Their modification is either by key, tonality, rhythm, or harmony. The third tier of themes encompasses fragmented tier one themes in



addition to shorter, less discrete theme, where there is not enough of the melody to classify it theme as a tier one or tier two theme.

The piece is composed of a limited number of themes, many of which are repurposed in order to express a different action or emotion that the original theme. Many sections have a single tier one theme, but multiple tier two and tier three themes, which connect the 22 sections and the diverse thematic material. The purpose of my organization is that it simplifies the structure of the whole piece, and stratifies the themes that are scattered throughout. Instead of dredging through the 22 sections, describing every individual melody and theme, I will lay out the blueprint of the piece thematically, though taking into account the positions of the themes and their relation to other themes running simultaneously to the one at hand. After the connection is made between various themes and their different positions within the hierarchy, we can begin to fill in the alpine landscape as described through the music. From my analysis landscape, I will suggest stronger claims about the unsettled program for *Eine Alpensinfonie*.

From my own melodic analysis of the piece, I discovered potentially 14 tier one themes that are the central ideas that operate and direct *Eine Alpensinfonie*. These themes are the base of the entire work. Contrary to what the organization of the piece might suggest, not every section contains a tier one theme that relates to the given title. Some sections are filled with tier two themes that are following a tier one theme or foreshadowing the arrival of a tier one theme later on in the piece, either in the next section or beyond.

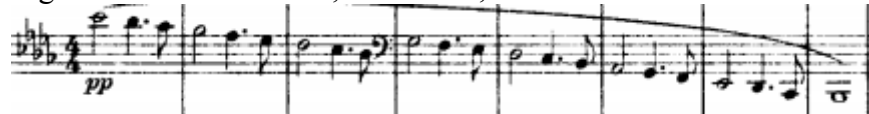
The first tier one theme that appears in the work is the Sun theme (Figure 1.1), which is played at the beginning of the sunrise. This theme is granted this title by its placement and the tier two themes located in the first section of the piece.

Figure 1.1: Sunrise theme, measure 42, Trumpet



The piece begins with a slow, cascading B-flat minor scale that starts in the winds and upper strings and falls through to the basses and low woodwinds (Figure 1.2). This tier two theme foreshadows the upcoming arrival of the Sunrise theme and because of its modification from A major in to B-flat minor, this theme can be titled the Sunset theme.

Figure 1.2: Sunset theme, measure 1, Bassoon



The Sunset theme reappears at the end of the symphony (Figure 1.3), in the second Nacht section, as the sun sets at the end of the day.

Figure 1.3: Sunset theme, measure 1146, Clarinet



The cyclical characteristic of the piece is fully realized with the Sunset theme appearing at both the beginning and the end. The piece mimics the timespan of a day, with the sunrise and the sunset, and thus as the piece finishes, it could smoothly transition back to the beginning of the piece. The second most prominent appearance of the sunrise theme follows directly after the Storm scene, at the beginning of the *Sonnenuntergang* (sunset) section (Figure 1.4). This tier two theme is very similar to the tier one theme in that both are in a major key, but this one cannot be called a sunrise theme by its position within the piece. It is classified as a sunset theme (tier two), but it retains the same effect as the tier one theme.

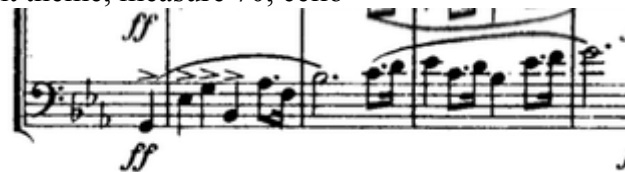
Figure 1.3: Sunset theme, measure 1004, violins



The tier one sunrise contains with it the glory and spectacle of the sunrise as the light pushes out the darkness of the alpine landscape. Similarly, the sunset pushes back the clouds and rain from the storm to reveal a beautiful and magnificent scene as the alpine journey comes to a triumphant close. This theme of the sun showing itself is common throughout the piece and appears in many forms. It accompanies the triumph at the reaching of the summit and it shines through during the vision section. When the theme is played in its minor version, it creates an unsettled emotion in the listener, such as when the fog enters and the storm nears its arrival. The sun theme is extremely versatile for Strauss, as his variations indicate time in the piece as well as foreshadow events, both positive and negative. The minor theme lowers the listener into darkness, and we know that either our adventure had ended, or that danger is approaching. The major theme announces the arrival of the sun and indulges the glory and beauty of the sun as it shines over the alpine land.

Another theme that operates in a similar way to the Sun theme is the Ascent theme (Figure 2.1), which first appears directly after the Sunrise, in the Ascent section.

Figure 2.1: Ascent theme, measure 70, cello

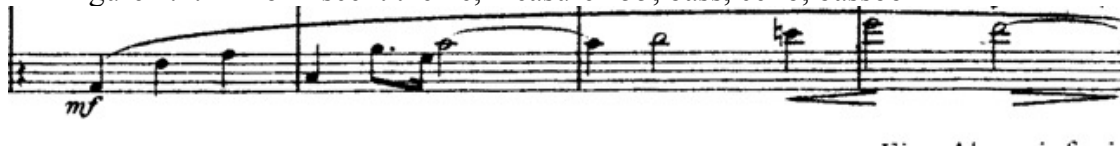


During the first half of the piece, the Ascent theme appears mostly in its major form, indicating movement up the mountain closer to the peak. An exception to this is at the beginning of the

“Entry into the Woods”, where the mood shifts to trepidation and fear of the forest (Figure 2.2).

This trepidation passes quickly as the major theme returns during the same section.

Figure 2.2: Minor Ascent theme, measure 155, bass, cello, bassoon



The Ascent theme also earns its title from its melodic upward contour, as it mimics an arpeggio, then moves in a scalar motion towards the highest note of the theme. Some tier two versions of the theme climb beyond the top note, emphasizing the upward motion of the theme. During the second half of the piece (using the “At the Peak” as the midpoint), Strauss manipulates the theme to show a change in direction. Instead of a melody that aims upwards, Strauss inverts the Ascent theme to indicate downward motion, as the landscape has shifted from going up the mountain to descending the mountain. This inverted Ascent theme can be called the Descent theme (Figure 2.3). Strauss’s manipulation of the themes can create an exact opposite of the theme as it appeared earlier in the piece. For example, the Descent theme is a near-perfect inversion of the original Ascent theme.

Figure 2.3: Descent theme,

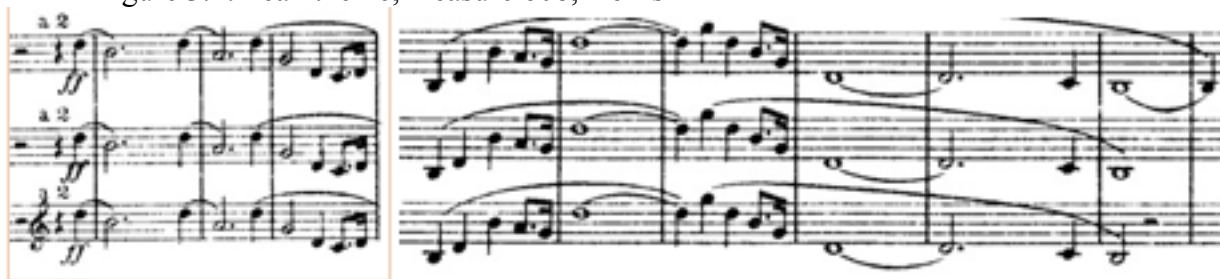


The rising Ascent theme appears seldom in the second half of the piece. This is yet another theme that is indicative of the cyclical nature of this piece and it helps to detail the landscape Strauss was creating. The combination of a majority of Ascent themes appearing the first half

and a majority of Descent themes appearing the second half create a nice bell curve, with the Peak directly in the middle. The movement of the sun in this piece follows a similar motion, as it rises in the first half, peaks at the Peak section, then falls for the remainder of the work. From these two themes, a cycle has been created, and the form of a mountain becomes part of the picture.

The next most prominent main theme is the climax and midpoint of the piece, which occurs during the *Auf dem Gipfel* (At the Peak) section. This theme is one of the loudest and most involved themes in the entire piece. The climax is preceded by a massive low brass chorale that rises from the depths of the contrabass trombone and is taken by the trumpet, who prepares the way for the Horns in F, who announce the arrival at the peak with an explosion of sound, as the main Peak melody is revealed (table 3, 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Peak theme, measure 608, Horns in F

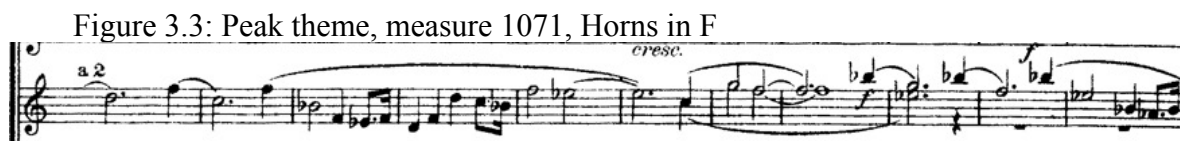


It is referenced and foreshadowed frequently throughout the first half of the piece, as the peak of the mountain is visible, but the journey has many more events along the way before it reaches that point (Figure 2.2).

Figure 3.2: Foreshadowed peak theme,



The references vary in length and in style. There are many instances when a short section of the Peak theme is played, and it acts as a foreshadowing tier two theme. This theme also makes an appearance closer to the end of the piece, as if it is referencing the past, a remembrance of the journey that took place (Figure 3.3).



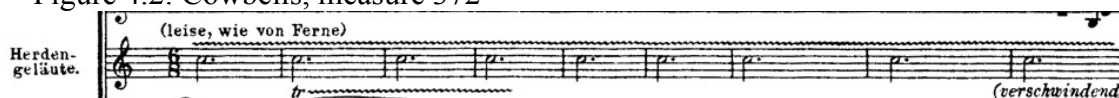
The peak theme helps accentuate Strauss's alpine landscape by zeroing in on the emotions expressed by this theme by its position within the piece. In addition, the process of reaching the peak of a mountain is no menial task. While I maintain my position on there being no climber(s) for the journey, Strauss climbing the mountain when he was young required hours of intense climbing with no assistance of modern accommodations (like vehicles and chairlifts). With a journey as tough as climbing to the peak of a mountain, reaching the top of the mountain and looking at the landscape elicits strong emotions of accomplishment and triumph over nature. Strauss captures those feelings perfectly within this theme. Just before the peak is reached, Strauss spurs excitement, building the brass from the bottom to the top, holding the dominant chord just long enough before the moment of relief and accomplishment flows from the horns and strings. The horns carrying the theme at this point is an interesting choice, as there is a feeling of heroism that comes from past horn themes such as the section solos in Beethoven's Third Symphony, holding the main theme in Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel*, and at times carrying the heroism in his *Ein Heldenleben*. The horn's heroic sounds return as another theme in the piece, but the emotional content is overwhelming and this section is one of the most powerful in that perspective and outlines one more scene within Strauss's alpine landscape.

One of the most topically rich sections of the piece is the pastoral scene in the first half of *Eine Alpensinfonie*. The “Auf der Alm” (At the pasture) scene is teeming with pastoral themes (Figure 4.1) and animal noises, with the most prominent sound of the section is the infamous cowbells (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1: Pastoral theme, measure 374, Horn in E-flat



Figure 4.2: Cowbells, measure 372



The cowbells are one of the most disputed instruments over their sound if it is intended to mimic the sound of animals (cows or sheep in particular) or if it is meant only as a percussive sound and no more. Outside of *Eine Alpensinfonie*, where the cowbells are meant to directly imitate animals, as it creates the pastoral landscape, the next most know use of cowbells during this period of music was in Mahler’s Sixth Symphony. The Sixth symphony is not meant to be programmatic in any sense<sup>76</sup>, so the cowbells are placed for their percussive sound. Thomas Peattie wrote at length, discussing why Mahler might have included the cowbells in his symphony. He writes that, “the cowbells have been understood as both a symbol of solitude and contemplation and as a sonority that is suggestive of a specifically alpine setting.”<sup>77</sup> This statement works well for Strauss’s creation of the alpine landscape through his composition, but

<sup>76</sup> Mahler stated in 1900, “down with programs!” This comes very soon after his Third Symphony, and his Fourth Symphony indicates a strong shift away from his previous compositional style, with a traditional, “almost Mozartean design.” He wanted to create distance between himself and Mahler, striving to become a “pure musician,” who moved “in a realm outside of time, space, and the forms of individual appearances.” Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, 22.

<sup>77</sup> Peattie, Thomas. “Mahler’s Alpine Journey,” p. 69.

this is problematic for Mahler, who did not intend for his Sixth Symphony to have any program attached to it. In the footnote of the revised score published in November 1906, Mahler wrote,

The cowbells must be treated with great discretion so as to produce a realistic impression of the bells of a grazing herd of cattle whose sound drifts from the distance, sometimes alone and sometimes in groups, in sounds of high and low pitch. It must, however, be made explicit that this technical remark does not allow for programmatic interpretation.<sup>78</sup>

Mahler admits that the cowbells do indicate a strong sense of pastoralism and grazing cattle, but he had no intention for the sound to be heard that way. Although, for Strauss's case, many scholars agree that the cowbells add a characteristically pastoral sound to the whole section.

Considering how the two composers used cowbells in (supposedly)<sup>79</sup> diametrically opposed manners, it is important to analyze the relationship between the two giants of the nineteenth century. Strauss and Mahler were relatively close, though it might be challenging to say that the two were friends. Strauss, after some time studying Nietzsche's texts, was a defiant atheist, and Mahler was Jewish (though he converted to Catholicism to become a conductor in the courts of Vienna), creating this rift in understanding the world. Mahler had an affinity for metaphysics, while Strauss rejected metaphysics altogether, resulting from, again, his philosophical study of Nietzsche. Regardless of their differences, the two still interacted frequently and sent numerous letters to each other on many occasions. Strauss and Mahler also participated in each other's premieres, each with their own interesting story. At the premiere of Mahler's Third Symphony, after the first movement came to its dramatic finish after nearly half an hour of playing, Strauss allegedly rushed to the edge of the stage, bursting with applause, thinking that the symphony was finished. As the rest of the alleged story goes, Strauss became

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<sup>78</sup> Gustav Mahler, *Symphony no. 3* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1906).

<sup>79</sup> One could argue that cowbells used as a percussion instrument are there for their striking aural timbre in contrast with the rest of the percussion, but cowbells are so often associated with the pastoral that it is hard to overlook the use of a cowbell without the pastoral connection.



quite bored of the rest of the symphony and left before it was completed. Mahler attended the premiere of Strauss's single-movement opera, *Salome*, in Graz, Austria, and Mahler hailed the opera as "one of the greatest masterworks of our time."<sup>80</sup> As I discussed in the first chapter with Strauss relationship with Wagner, it is clear from multiple historical accounts that Strauss was very well acquainted with Mahler's music and his approach to thought, philosophy, and composition. Strauss had a great deal of disapproval of Mahler's religiousness, and "wondered why Mahler, "this aspiring, idealistic, and energetic artist," had converted to Christianity."<sup>81</sup> Even though the two were opposed on multiple fronts, Strauss was possibly well-versed in his understanding of Mahler's composition and his approaches to them, including how he navigates narrative in his piece and how he negotiates with programmatic themes and sounds, especially the controversial cowbells in his Sixth Symphony.

Cowbells are the most distinct sound in this section, though Strauss uses woodwind instruments and some performance techniques to create animals for the pastoral scene. The E-flat clarinet playing a flutter-tongued note, imitating what could be a sheep (Figure 4.3) and the piccolo with short and quiet grace notes, as if mimicking a bird call (Figure 4.4), add more life to our pastoral landscape.

Figure 4.3: Bird call, measure 372, E-flat clarinet

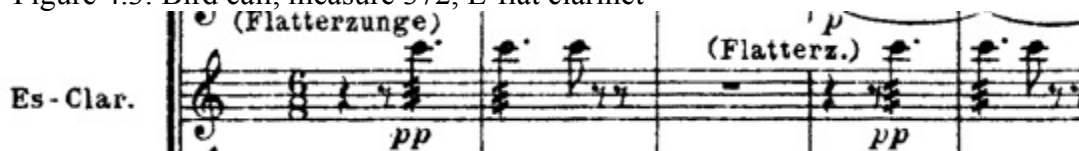
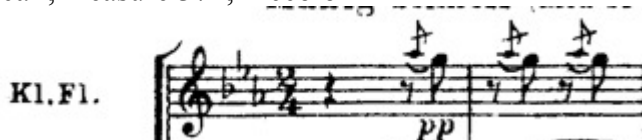


Figure 4.4: Bird call, measure 372, Piccolo



<sup>80</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, 10.

<sup>81</sup> Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, 34.

On top of all of the animal sounds is a simple melody played by the violas, cellos, and horns. This theme is in the comfortable key of E-flat major and follows a relatively scalar motion and is limited in its range and rhythmic complexity, and its harmony is very simple, focusing on the intervals of the fourth and the fifth, mostly avoiding the third and the sixth, though it does come into play occasionally (Figure 4.1). This pastoral theme is played repeatedly throughout the section while the animal noises occur and the cowbells ring constantly in the background. This scene is idyllic, with the animals in the vicinity and the bliss created by the simple, memorable melody, perfect for a pastoral scene. However, the animal sounds are not limited to just the pastoral section. Strauss makes further connections with Beethoven's Sixth Symphony by composing three distinct "bird calls" that occur during the Entry into the Woods section. While Strauss did not explicitly outline and name the different birdcalls like Beethoven did with his score, the sounds are too natural for them to be non-diegetic in their use. The birds are represented by the E-flat clarinet (Figure 4.5) (already known to be making animal sounds later in the piece), the flutes (Figure 4.6), and the oboes (Figure 4.7).

Figure 4.5: Bird call, measure 206, E-flat clarinet



Figure 4.6: Bird call, measure 209, Flutes



Figure 4.7: Bird call, measure 209, Oboes



All three of these instrument reach high enough pitches to mimic the whistle of a birdcall, and Strauss's short calls would indicate such. Each of the three calls follows a pattern, either by repetition of the same sound, such as the clarinet birdcall and the oboe birdcall, or are trilling on a high pitch followed by an extended version of a trill. With the connection to Beethoven's Sixth Symphony becoming more clear, the pastoral ideas are strengthened within Strauss's symphony. In addition, the creation of animal sounds throughout the alpine journey fill in more details about the landscape that Strauss is offering through his alpine symphony.

Another tier one theme that appears often throughout the piece is the climbing or mountain theme (Figure 5.1). This theme is simple, with its repetitive arpeggio motion, with cutting sixteenth note – eighth note pattern, that strikes through the orchestra to detail the mountain.

Figure 5.1: Climbing/Mountain theme, measure 118, trombones



The importance of this theme comes not from this harmony or melodic content, but by the contour of the melodic line. Following the contour of the theme creates a line that looks similar to a mountain, with multiple peaks and valleys, finishing with one final peak at the very end. This theme is important, because it is unique in its use, e.g. contour rather than melodic content,

and it is used to solidify the location of the landscape via the contour. It draws nicely the shape of a mountain, which may not be accurately portrayed to the listener aurally, but it conveys the idea of height and upward motion, similar to the Ascent theme. Even though I did initially mention that the climbing and mountain theme did not offer much in terms of melodic content, it does match well with the Alphorn section that appears in the Ascent section, where a sizable offstage brass section plays a harmonic progression that is meant to mimic either a hunting call or a tradition Alphorn group playing a melody (or even close to a bugle call) (Figure 5.2).

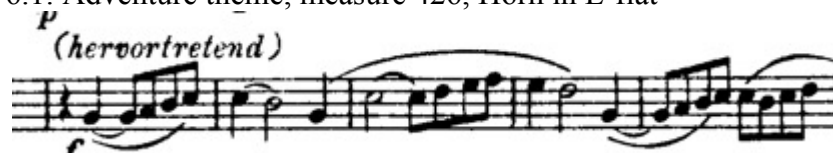
Figure 5.2: Hunting call, measure 122, offstage brass

The connection between the two is clear, because the mountain theme is at its roots an arpeggio and the horn call is a collection of arpeggios of the same scale played simultaneously. Also, the majority of the appearances of the mountain theme are played by a Horn in F, which adds an alpine context to the sound, or it sounds more like a hunting call, especially with the initial fifth that begins the theme. The mountain theme further connects with the Alphorns in this section by being played simultaneously by the strings. While the theme is not exactly the same, placing it in the second tier, it creates similar contour, rhythm, and harmony, matching the horn calls that are played in the background. This theme appears in many sections of the piece and at times that are not always expected, such as the “Auf dem Gletscher,” (On the Glacier) where the trumpet plays a minor version of the mountain theme, instilling the emotions of unsettlement during that particular section (table 3, 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Minor Climbing/Mountain theme, measure 498, Trumpet in B

An odd theme that sounds unexpectedly in the piece is the heroic theme played by the Horn in F during the “Durch Dickicht und Gestrüpp auf Irrwegen,” section (Figure 6.1). It sounds vaguely similar to the pastoral theme that precedes this, but it is much more heroic in its position and sound.

Figure 6.1: Adventure theme, measure 426, Horn in E-flat



As I mentioned earlier with the other occurrences of heroism being portrayed by the horn, this theme sounds strong and powerful, as if there is someone setting off on a journey and they are progressing with dignity and direction. The other most noticeable instance of this theme comes during the Storm scene, where, again, the theme comes out of the wind, clouds, and rain, as we emerge from the storm with power and might as continue to trek onwards down the mountain completing our alpine journey. This theme is the only theme that made me question whether my thoughts on the piece having a character or not were sound. This theme sounded at first like it indicated our hero, and their progression and strength to stay the course and continue the alpine journey. This pairing makes more sense with the second introduction of the theme during the storm, where the hero would come forth from the darkness and rain and march onward towards their ultimate goal of completing the alpine hike. The only problem is that it does not match with its initial appearance in the piece. The first instance theme (Figure 6.2) does not emerge from any danger or harm, and it arises from the pastoral setting of calmness and ease.

Figure 6.2: Adventure theme



This theme might be best suited to be named the adventure theme, as it marks the continuation of the journey, as the landscape transitions from the pasture to the thick brush or from the storm into the clear in time to catch the sunset. In any way, this theme does not seem to indicate any natural themes or ideas, which sticks out amongst the rest of the melodies in the rest of the symphony.

The final group of themes to address are the “leftover” themes that do not necessary direct and guide the piece through the landscape, such as the tier one themes that act as trail blazes on the alpine journey, but they add to our perception and enhance the landscape and an understanding of the program. These themes include the sounds at the waterfall scene and the stream that was encountered, the fog, the Apparition, the Storm, and Night. The scene at the waterfall is very nice and Strauss captures the sound of the waterfall (Figure 7) coming over the edge of a cliff perfectly with the twinkling of woodwinds and the smooth, rushing lines of the string section.

Figure 7: Waterfall theme, measure 304, strings and celeste

The image shows a musical score for the Waterfall theme, measure 304, featuring strings and celeste. The score is written for a full orchestra and includes the following parts: Celesta, (1. Pult) (1. Viol.), (2. Pult) (II. Viol.), (Die übrigen) (I. Viol.), (Die übrigen) (II. Viol.), Br. (in 2 Hälften), and Violone. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The celesta part is marked with *dim.* and *pp*. The string parts are marked with *pp* and *dim.*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

The twinkling almost acts as the soft mist that comes off the water as it falls down the side of the mountain. The rushing string lines replicate the water falling down and rushing towards the earth below. In the same vein of sound and landscape is the scene Wandering by the Stream, which Strauss seemed to approach with similar compositional goals in mind. The melody is sweet and smooth as it glides from one note to the next. It is not overly grand in its sound and it is in preparation of the waterfall that follows directly afterwards. It is small and reserved, and the water moves at a steady pace as it flows through the cracks in the rocks on the mountain, heading down towards the cliffs edge. While the stream theme (table 3, 8) is not as vivid as the scene at

the waterfall, the melody is written in order to express a soft and flowing stream in the alpine landscape.

Figure 8: Stream theme, measure 201, string section

The next theme that is significant to the landscape is the Nacht theme (Figure 9.1) that occurs throughout the piece. The first instance is in the very first section where the low brass softly plays a minor chord progression, gently lowering the listener into the darkness and setting the scene for the future arrival of the sun. This Nacht theme also takes on a major form, which appears a couple of times in the symphony and it represents the opposite of the night, which is the light or day (Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.1: Nacht theme, measure 9, low brass section



Figure 9.2: Nacht theme, measure 1051, organ



The Storm scene is the most intriguing of all the subthemes. The Storm has no tier one theme, except for the whistling and tumbling of the Wind Machine (Figure 10.1) and the thunder machine, and the cascading of the strings as they replicate the rain falling in waves from the clouds above (Figure 10.2).

Figure 10.1: Storm section, measure 838, Wind Machine



Figure 10.2: Storm section, measure 841, string section



The intensity of the storm is magnified by the whirlwind of themes that the scene captures. At points during the scene, there are multiple variations of tier one themes occurring at the same time, in various keys and rhythms, distorting the listener and matching the wild alpine storm raging on the mountain (Figures 10.3,4,5,6,7).

Figure 10.3: Descent theme (storm), measure 859, second trumpet

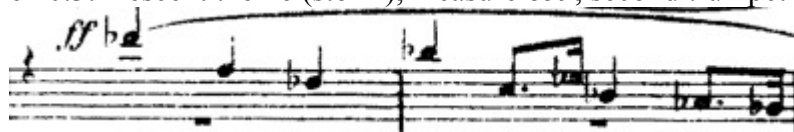


Figure 10.4: Climbing/Mountain theme (storm), measure 868, Horns in F

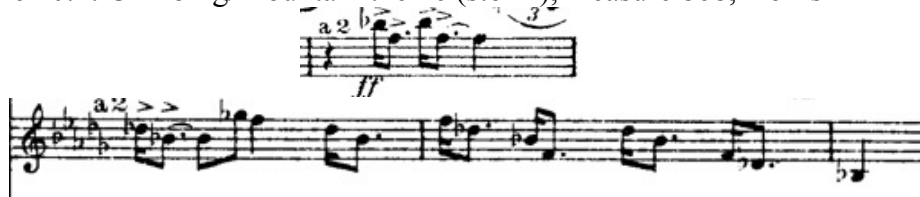


Figure 10.5: Descent theme (storm), measure 902, E-flat Clarinet

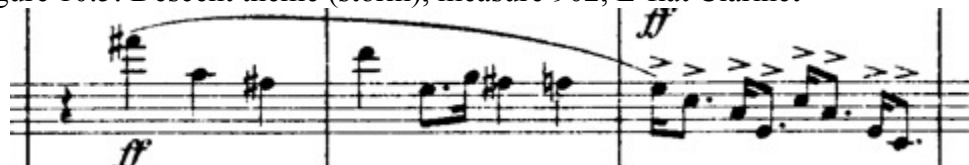


Figure 10.6: Climbing/Mountain theme (storm), measure 884, violins

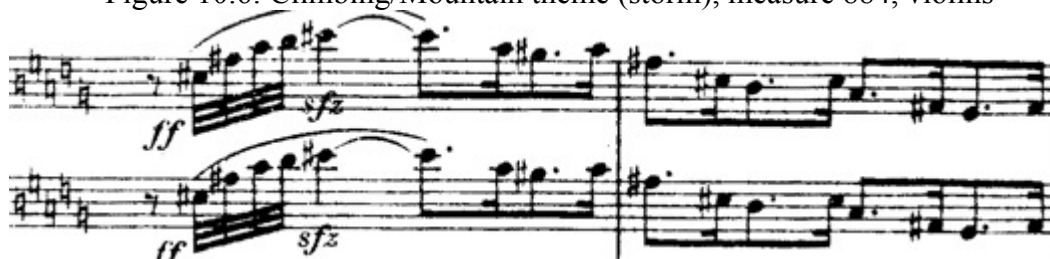
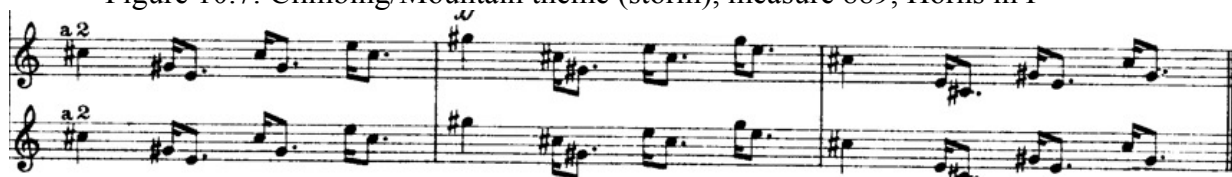


Figure 10.7: Climbing/Mountain theme (storm), measure 889, Horns in F



This scene draws further parallels with Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, in that both symphonies had a Storm scene that was integral to the piece. However, Strauss takes the storm concept and expands dramatically on the idea, adding more excitement with percussion instruments that had never been heard in concert halls before and the entire orchestra playing mixed themes and sounds to generate the fierce storm. It is unique in that it matches the sounds of the storm so well, with the winds rushing by and the rain pelting the earth. The themes that are played during this (outside of the themes encompassed in the Storm) essentially add more confusion and drama to the scene by playing melodies that were previously heard as beautiful and descriptive, and are now heard in an entirely different manner, creating strong emotions of fear and tentativeness in the listener. Only with the entrance of the heroic and adventure theme is the listener granted a moment of relaxation and the "good" emotions return from earlier in the piece. This storm scene is intriguing and one of the more colorful passages within the piece, by its use of onomatopoeic sounds to create the image of the storm, then filling in the rest with the amalgam of themes and melodies interspersed through the scene.

These small, mostly onomatopoeic sounds and themes are not generally referred to as the landmark themes of the piece, but they are important in filling in the gaps and solidifying the landscape that Strauss is trying to achieve. What would the pasture or the woods be without the animals? If there were no cowbells in the piece, how strongly would this landscape align with the alpine world? How would the storm sound if it were a mix of heavily manipulated themes, with no wind or thunder machine? All of these onomatopoeic sounds add to the descriptive scenes within the symphony. They do not operate as high tiered themes, though they are important in the detail and they set this piece apart from the other compositions similar to it. This level of detail within a piece of music directed towards imitating and mimicking an alpine landscape

stands out amongst other compositions during the turn of the century. Not even Strauss's other tone poems use as much imagery as *Eine Alpensinfonie*. The main themes establish the idea of the scene and create the boundaries in which the music can operate, and these small themes fill in all the descriptive gaps and add more to the picture than just a mountain, trees, or hilly fields. It adds life to the work, and it plants the listener in the heart of the Alps, experiencing all the natural sounds and emotions that one could gather from such an experience.

The second stage of analysis for the themes and motives in *Eine Alpensinfonie* is to relate them back to the programmatic features as described in the first chapter and to analyze whether their semiotic value results from the program or if the program is decided by the thematic material. The themes relate with the program in two different ways. The first group contains themes directly connect with nature, e.g. the waterfall theme or the multiple bird calls. The themes in this group are meant to be heard exactly as the thing they are attempting to recreate. The second group of themes contributes to the program, though it is possible for a varying interpretation given the knowledge of the program. This group includes the Ascent theme and the Sunrise theme as a few examples of themes that do not aurally mimic these events (which these events do not generate distinguishable sounds), but attempt to outline them in a way that, along with the influence of the program, helps the listener detail their alpine landscape.

For the first group, the program is less relevant to our interpretation of Strauss's music. These themes imitate the natural alpine world clearly and articulate a specific image that is hard to confuse with another subject. Two examples that illustrate this idea are the waterfall theme and the three different bird calls. A waterfall does not generate a distinct melodic line, but it does have a sound that can be captured and recreated through instruments like woodwinds and strings, who can imitate a soft sprinkling mist drifting from the falls, or smooth, rushing patterns,

imitating the water as it cascades downward. For this theme, the music can stand on its own, as it is clearly representing the sounds of a waterfall nearby. The use of the program might facilitate the speed at which the listener matches the music with the waterfall, or help to solidify any uncertainty in the audience. The bird calls operate similarly to the waterfall theme, only there is not a programmatic title to accompany it, so its perception is based solely in the musical composition. Upon hearing the bird calls in *Eine Alpensinfonie*, Beethoven's *Pastoral* resurfaces as a close relative, with the three bird calls, clearly labeled by species in the score. Strauss did not label the bird calls by species, and the calls written in the music might not mimic a specific bird species, but the style is similar with the high pitched chirping of the piccolo, flute, and oboe. These two themes operate independently from the program, as the music clearly portrays the sound of the waterfall and the bird calls. Other examples of this case are the cowbells in the pastoral section, indicating the presence of cows and livestock in the landscape, and the wind and thunder machines used during the Storm scene, generating the sound of wind and thunder to accompany the strings representing the cascading rain falling down. The music of the storm scene is accompanied by a programmatic title, but the onomatopoeic sounds of the strings and the percussion instruments are able to stand on their own and represent a storm clearly without the assistance of the title.

The second group of themes are more abstract when taken out of their programmatic context. Unlike the first group, which does not need to rely on the programmatic titles to portray their intended scene, object, or event, this collection of themes relies heavily on the titles in order to be understood as they are intended. Because there are some themes that do not pair up with a title, mostly in situations where there is more than one main theme per section, I have given my own titles based off of my perception. The foremost example of a theme that leans heavily on the

titles is the Sun theme. This theme has two different functions throughout the piece: sunrise and sunset. The first appearance, as noted earlier in this chapter, is in the first section, in the sunset form, though this is not realized by the program until the Sunrise section. When the Sun theme is played in the sunrise form directly at the top of the Sunrise section, the sunset theme in the first section is given programmatic context, as it is the minor form of the sunrise theme. In its simplest form, the sunrise and sunset themes are descending major and minor scales, which, without their titles, struggle to compare to the level of imitation and representation present in the first group of themes. The Ascent and Descent themes work similarly to the Sun theme, considering their reliance on the programmatic titles to orient their interpretation within the piece. Matching the sunrise theme, the Ascent theme first appears at the very beginning of the Ascent section, establishing its programmatic context. Given no title, the perception of the Descent theme relies heavily on that of the Ascent theme.

This analysis is important to the musical interpretation of this piece. It is necessary to know that there are some themes in this piece which are abstract and their meaning relies so heavily on our interpretation of the program along with the music. These themes are important because they make up a majority of the narrative and the programmatic aspects. The themes that are more imitative are going to be understood as such and do not need a program to be heard correctly. However, the first group of abstract themes allows us to hear the sun rise and set and to sense an ascent or a descent. The two groups work together seamlessly and successfully to realize the alpine world. The first group of themes creates the outlines of the program, while the second group of themes fill in the blanks and bring color and life to the landscape that Strauss has imagined.

The themes that Strauss uses are the tools that paint and orient the alpine landscape. The combination of the tier one themes with their subordinate tier two themes, operate in conjunction to provide different ideas and scenes throughout the symphony. While a tier one theme may introduce one idea and scene, the manipulated version of that theme results in the complete opposite. The ease in understanding the individual themes adds to the understanding of the program that Strauss had intended for this piece to have. This is an alpine symphony at its core, and is represented strongly by the melodies and sounds located throughout. While I did have to have a knowledge of the individual titles in order to give titles to some of the themes, the rest of the tier two themes, which were based off of the tier one themes, required only a reverse of the initial idea, such as the sunrise to sunset, or ascent to descent, or day and night. The landscape is fully realized through Strauss's vivid and colorful themes. His use of contour to outline the shape of the mountains, the twinkling of woodwinds to create the mist from the waterfall, the cowbells and animal sounds to replicate a pasture, and the glory and spectacle of the peak theme contribute strongly to the pictorial aspect as well as the emotional aspect. *Eine Alpensinfonie* transports the listener to the Alps, allowing the listener to experience the tumultuous weather, and watch the sun peek over the curve of the earth and set as it breaks forth through the storm clouds. It is a symphony like no other with how descriptive the themes are and how well Strauss places the listener directly into the heart of the South German Alps. It paints this perfect picture of the mountains, complete with a glowing sunrise, a rushing stream, the mists falling from a waterfall, the pastoral sounds of the alpine field, the sense of glory and accomplishment of reaching the peak, the terror and fear of the storm with winds flying by and rain cascading from the sky, the clouds making way for a beautiful sunset, and the descent back into the night. Reading the 22 titles gives us a general idea of what the story is meant to look like, and we can

use our imagination to fill in the gaps along the way, but the level of imagery within the themes and composition cement our imagination of the alpine landscape firmly in exactly what Strauss wanted.

## CONCLUSION

*Eine Alpensinfonie* is an important piece of the late-Romantic repertoire because it provides such fertile ground for scholarship and lengthy discussions about its creation, the background and development of the program, the thematic material and how it weaves together piece of the alpine setting to create a single, distinct landscape, and how all of these pieces of evidence and musical material interact with each other to form what Christopher Morris described as the bookend for nineteenth century music.

From the analysis of the different approaches to the program of *Eine Alpensinfonie*, as well as my own based off of my own research and in reference to the other scholars, the program of this piece remains undecided. Many of the claims made by the scholars are logical and are grounded in notable evidence, but there is not enough evidence, either that has not been uncovered or just doesn't exist, for any claim to be realized as the definitive answer to our question of finding the program of *Eine Alpensinfonie*. We can refer back to the point that Strauss did not write a prose program for this piece outside of the 22 titles that he gave for the sections within. From what we know, he did not declare any programmatic background, which leaves room for any reasonable interpretation based on substantial evidence. While I state my own claim in comparison to the rest of the scholars, my listening and understanding of the evidence is just one perspective of the musical narrative. This is one important aspect that this essay discusses. The role of musical narrative is crucial to the perception and interpretation of this piece. I make my own claim based off of my subjective experience of the music, and, though



I do not suggest that my claim is the most correct of any, I follow Nattiez's suggestion of open interpretation, as it allows for discourse and does not remove the subjective nature, which is our emotional state and our reflective nature upon listening to music.

The second chapter of this essay is also important to the study of this piece as it reconciles the program with the music and attempts to create an in-depth listening of the music. It is much more complex than a first time listener will understand. One has to take into consideration the methods in which Strauss was using to compose this music as well as the programmatic titles that he was using to organize and structure the piece so that the narrative makes sense. In addition, the second chapter begins to show why this piece is so important to study, because of its unique compositional approach. Strauss modifies the leitmotif technique that Wagner used and, rather than keeping the themes in their original keys to preserve their meaning, he manipulates them in order to invert and distort their meaning to create a theme that directly opposes the original, thus helping to detail the narrative and program. Every theme can function as its inverse with a simple harmonic or melodic permutation. This chapter also applies the use of topics to *Eine Alpensinfonie*, which is a great method to organize and to describe the music that Strauss was composing. Though I do not create a lexicon of topics for Strauss, it is helpful to look at some of his contemporaries like Bartok and Mahler and see the comparisons between them. The three composers match up well in terms of their topical usage, and Bartok matches even to some of the themes that Strauss used in *Eine Alpensinfonie*. From this stage, it allows topic theorists to further explore Strauss and his unique compositional method to create a new lexicon for Strauss, given his exceptionally diverse range of styles, even just in his tone poems.

While this essay does not uncover any smoking guns or hidden archival material, it provides a contemporary and up-to-date understanding and hearing of this piece of music as it relates to the recent publications on topic theory and program music and to other pieces of music that are similar to it, such as Beethoven's *Pastoral*, or Mahler's Sixth Symphony and even Sibelius, with his naturalistic symphonies. *Eine Alpensinfonie* is not the most popular piece to perform in the concert halls, largely as a result of its massive orchestration, but it still has plenty of opportunities for future musicological research, especially in areas of the program and the topic theory surrounding the compositional technique. I hope that this essay spurs a renewed interest in this magnificent and complex piece of music, as it is one of Strauss's largest compositions and has some of the most interesting conception histories of any of his tone poems. As Schoenberg said in the 1920s, Strauss was truly a revolutionary with this piece of music. It reimagined the limits of musical composition and the size of the orchestra and the many different and unique sounds that could be created from traditional instruments as well as those that have never been on a concert stage before. It is innovation and a culmination at the same time. It was groundbreaking in its program and descriptive nature, while culminating the end of the tone poem genre and capping off the program music of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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