

West Virginia University

Goldmark, Passim

Nathanael Turner

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## Abstract

All that persists of Goldmark's output in the repertoire today is his A minor violin concerto. Both performers and critics have often made overarching statements about this concerto, which hasn't recently enjoyed the popularity of some of its romantic cousins. This has allowed such statements to go broadly unexamined. Phillip Huscher, in program notes for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, invokes Goldmark's love for Mendelssohn. The liner notes for Vera Tsu's 1996 Naxos release claim that this work is a "development of the musical language of Mendelssohn," suggestive of his "idiom," and that it exists "firmly in [Mendelssohn's] tradition." Mendelssohn certainly was a titanic cultural figure during the formative years of Goldmark's career, however, study of Goldmark's concerto and memoir indicates less of a great Mendelssohnian influence and more of a wide-ranging network of inspirations in the compositional process. Despite the presence of Mendelssohn-like "turns of phrase," similar key area/figuration combinations, even quotes, these are present from various sources, and the alleged Mendelssohnian characteristics appear in arguably less convincing ways than the influences of composers whom Goldmark knew, worked with, and admired. Among them, Liszt, Brahms, and Wagner. With such a thick layer of attribution looming over Goldmark in the public consciousness, the task at hand is to elucidate his influences, and not expect that the listener distinguish such influence by "private intuitions, but from a study of [the] musical imagery." We must examine the "expressive vocabulary" used by Goldmark and seek out the origin of its several contents.

Goldmark Károly was born May 18, 1830, at Keszthely, in Hungary. Moving through many poor towns, Goldmark never attended school and ran freely with his many siblings through the meadows, hills, and orchards of his homeland. He would return home only for dinners, which he could always expect to be, in his own words, “rather scanty.”<sup>i</sup> Poverty imposed some limitation on his exposure to art as a child. As he explains, there was a lack of any art for art’s sake in his little proletarian town. Sculpture, theater, poetry, and literature did not exist there. Nevertheless, Goldmark, through a chance hearing of the Holy Mass from afar as he lay on a hilltop in a hazelnut grove, became enamored of music. Beginning with lessons given by a local amateur violinist, young Goldmark dedicated himself to learning music, later on committing to a trudge of 2 hours twice a week to study with a more competent teacher in Ödenburg, and eventually being admitted to the conservatory in Vienna in 1847. Here he studied violin with Joseph Böhm, and harmony under Gottfried Preyer.

1848 saw revolution, and Goldmark was obliged to leave Vienna, where for the last few years he had anyway been in a sorry financial state. Upon returning home to the town of Deutschkreutz, Goldmark was conscripted into the militia of the Hungarian nationalists, although Habsburg loyalists quickly crushed all rebellion. Being unable to then return to Vienna, both for lack of money and the closing of the schools, Goldmark took up a post as first violin for the Ödenburg theater. After 3 years, finally returning to Vienna, he filled the same position at the Carl theater, where he remained for nearly a decade more. His tenure accompanying musical farces and light opera, and the brief instruction he had received at the conservatory were then all he knew of music. To that point, his gods had been “Beriót, Alard, and

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Vieuxtemps,"<sup>ii</sup> and in the course of his daily work, he was "mired in the most vulgar, most vapid music."<sup>iii</sup>

He recounts in his memoir the slow ascent from these unsophisticated depths, starting with exposure to Beethoven sonatas and the chamber music of Mendelssohn. It is here that Goldmark first mentions Mendelssohn, in whose tradition he allegedly so firmly sits, even into the heights of his career as a composer, and the most masterful periods of his technique. It must be said here that to so carelessly categorize Mr. Goldmark, whose prolific body of work spans no small range of styles and genres, and displays the influences of composers far beyond just Mendelssohn, is to do him a grave disservice. Goldmark certainly began here, this having been his first exposure to music beyond either theater music or the idiomatic concerti of Spohr, Vieuxtemps and others. He even states himself that his early chamber works "savoured very strongly of Mendelssohn,"<sup>iv</sup> and says of an early psalm that it was "pure Mendelssohn, and nothing else."<sup>v</sup> Goldmark, however, like any good artist, would not be complacent. His style developed. Goldmark found himself in the year 1858 settled in Budapest (for unexplained "family reasons"). He took advantage of this time to study the works of the composers who had recently so greatly arrested his senses away from the saccharine and showy violin repertoire of the Italian and French schools. After a period of intense study of counterpoint and theory, Bach's Well-tempered Clavier, and the works of Beethoven's third period, he, "all at once, got on to [his] own two feet; the Mendelssohn influence had been overcome."<sup>vi</sup>

By the time that the violin concerto was premiered, Goldmark had already established himself in Viennese musical society, having appeared on programs alongside the likes of Brahms and Liszt, and having developed a warm friendship with the former. He had written

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concert overtures, symphonic poems, a symphony, string quartets, a string quintet, suites for piano, and even an opera which was to become wildly successful in the following years.

Throughout his 1876 violin concerto, a great variety of orchestral textures and harmonic language abound, weaving throughout the solo's grand tour de force, born aloft at its most virtuosic heights by the combined texture of supportive woodwinds, alternately militaristic and gallant brass, and similarly tumultuous or singing strings. The soloist, at times leading, at times arguing with the orchestra in tutti melodies and interlocking figurations, provides a nearly uninterrupted slew of excitement as it sings its cantilena and the intermittent sections of more violinistic fireworks.

Goldmark tells in his memoir the story of a private reading of an early piano arrangement of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, and of how an unforgettable impression was made upon him.<sup>vii</sup> He points out that it was a great challenge to the tradition of Mendelssohn still en vogue at that time in Vienna. He recounts the daring of the rich new harmonic vocabulary. This marked yet another influential step away from that old style for Goldmark.<sup>1</sup> The year 1879 would see Dvořák's violin concerto, also in A minor, also decidedly more "traditional," and in a similar nationalist character to the Goldmark, with its strident Magyar march theme. But is Dvořák also blazing on in Mendelssohn's tradition? A wider variety of influence is present. The continuation of not just Mendelssohn, but the whole tableau of the past from which Goldmark's largely self-educated musical sense was wrought.

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<sup>1</sup> Goldmark, 122. Mendelssohn had died only 14 years earlier, and Goldmark was in the orchestra for his funeral concert which was to have been conducted by Mendelssohn himself before the news of his death arrived.

In his memoir, Goldmark remarked of the great innovation<sup>2</sup> happening around him, “unable to be a pioneer and unwilling to be a fellow traveller, I went my own way.” As the scholars at Bachtrack note, he possessed a great command over the “latest harmonic and technical developments.”<sup>viii</sup> Goldmark very adroitly blended a multitude of influences into his characteristic harmonic language. As early as the composition of his *Sakuntala* concert overture in 1866, he was keenly aware and adamant that “Jewish-oriental-exotic music could exert a stimulating influence on our western art.”<sup>ix</sup> This was his ethos, and it colored all of his post-Budapest output. This distinctive style set aside a place for his music in the hearts of the public. It also set his music into tangential conflict with Wagner’s.<sup>3</sup> Goldmark wrote as a critic for the *Austrian Constitutional Newspaper* and was in that capacity instrumental to the foundation of the Vienna Wagner Society.<sup>x</sup> We have already noted the influence of Tristan on Goldmark, but the purpose here is not to replace one allegation of monolithic influence with another. Goldmark would not allow Wagner’s willful questioning and abandonment of the traditional forms to influence him too greatly. He worked, at least on his opera, “with a musical instinct for what was appropriate and correct.”<sup>xi</sup>

With the overall impact of Wagner established, we can explore some of the other influences. These appear within Goldmark’s concerto in a more concrete way. Much of the ‘Mendelssohn’ within the Goldmark concerto is not even morally certain. It is largely characterized by small figures which are curiosities at best, but certainly just the kinds of things one would declare Mendelssohnian in a cursory way. The first slow section of Goldmark is

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<sup>2</sup> Almost certainly Wagner

<sup>3</sup> The Nazi party at least thought so. The Anschluss marked the end of Goldmark’s ubiquity in Austria and is perhaps another somber entry to the list of reasons that his broader work languishes in obscurity.

anticipated by a half cadence in E minor just before it is firmly established by a harmonic underpinning of strings alternating *mi sol* in triplets. This evokes the opening of the Mendelssohn concerto.<sup>xii</sup> Usages of similar figuration can be observed throughout both works.<sup>xiii</sup> These may be common enough orchestration techniques, but one must first learn them somewhere! It is not unlikely that Goldmark absorbed much of his sense for orchestration, which he does not mention in depth, from his early “savouring” of Mendelssohn. Near the beginning of this project, I undertook it to make some charts comparing the structures of the Goldmark and Mendelssohn concerti.<sup>xiv</sup> This did not turn up much similarity outside of that which would be expected based on the form, but it served to highlight the corresponding structural sections of the two works. This led to another interesting little tidbit. An homage, conscious or not. In a section correspondent between these two concerti, Goldmark makes conspicuous use of a quote of the triumphant statement of the theme material at the end of the development of the Mendelssohn concerto. It passes by quickly in several voices at once underneath the solo rising virtuosically to a climactic cadence, but it is there, and audible.<sup>xv</sup>

Goldmark was in no small part, as previously discussed, influenced by the works of Beethoven. He recounts an episode of his young self, once invited to the home of a post office clerk to play a piano trio, asking again and again for the poor pianist to play the sonatas of Beethoven until he was too exhausted to go on. This marked the beginning, as we mentioned before, of his ascent from the repertorial “mire.” In the third movement of the Goldmark concerto, there is another quote, but this time it is from Beethoven’s concert overture to Goethe’s *Egmont*.<sup>xvi</sup> The influence of Liszt can be seen in the concerto’s structure. It features a

prototypic form of thematic transformation,<sup>4</sup> the technique of which Liszt and Berlioz made commanding and groundbreaking use in their writing. The theme of the Goldmark, a Magyar march,<sup>5</sup> is virtually omnipresent throughout the first movement, molded and twisted in order to be fit into whatever mood needed it, providing new material for development, but retaining its core identity. Another formal similarity to the work of Liszt can be drawn thusly: Goldmark's "codas assume developmental proportions."<sup>xvii</sup> In comparison to the Mendelssohn concerto, which features a coda of approximately 20 measures, the Goldmark's coda, clocking in at 55 measures, ventures through a much more expansive harmonic, timbral, and technical range, featuring much thicker orchestration. These characteristics belie the rapidly approaching end of the movement.

The second movement of Goldmark's concerto does not show us much in the way of Mendelssohn. The movements are an air, in ternary form, and a rondo respectively. The substance of the Goldmark is more "characteristic of Wagnerian endless melody."<sup>xviii</sup> The Goldmark features a prominent Sarabande rhythm.<sup>6</sup> Goldmark exhibits more willingness to push and pull the form than does Mendelssohn, making effective use of cadential elision. This muddles the sense of closure at the end of broader phrases allowing them to slide into the next and extending them into the 'endless' melody emblematic of the Wagner influence.

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<sup>4</sup> Macdonald. A term used to define the process of modifying a theme so that in a new context it is different but yet manifestly made of the same elements.

<sup>5</sup> The most famous example is the 'March Hongroise' from Berlioz *Damnation of Faust*, originally the Rákóczi March, unofficial state anthem of Habsburg controlled Hungary. Goldmark heard such marches as the military passed through the towns during his childhood.

<sup>6</sup> A stately dance characterized by motion toward the second beat of each bar in triple meter.



We may look at the final movement of Goldmark's violin concerto as a microcosm of the idea which has been so far explored. The finale of the Goldmark is a lively and colorful dance whose rhythms and meter evoke the feeling of a polacca.<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Spohr's violin concerto no. 9, which young Goldmark recounts having played in his audition for the Vienna Conservatory, features an alla polacca finale. The finale of Schumann's violin concerto features a polacca rhythm.<sup>8</sup> Schumann's student Albert Dietrich wrote a violin concerto in the same key as Schumann's with a polacca finale. This was premiered by the same soloist who would, one year in the future premiere Goldmark's concerto! Wieniawski wrote polonaise showpieces. It is not unlikely that Goldmark, a student of violin around this time, knew these pieces. The most glaring past polacca, however, is the finale of Beethoven's triple concerto. A lively rondo alla polacca which features more of the virtuosic brilliance than stately dance feel. Goldmark held Beethoven in great reverence, so it would come as no surprise that he chose to compose a similarly virtuosic polacca movement to close his own violin concerto.<sup>9</sup>

So, while we can certainly see the influence of Mendelssohn throughout the Goldmark concerto, it is only alongside the influence of many others. Perhaps these selective comparisons, ignoring the great influence of Beethoven, whose music gave Goldmark his

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<sup>7</sup> According to the Oxford Companion to Music: A Polish dance in triple time and of moderate speed. It has a processional and stately character, having originated in courtly 16th-century ceremonies. The early polonaise bears little resemblance to the 19th-century dance, which is characterized by triple time, phrases starting on the first beat of the bar, the repetition of short, rhythmic motifs, and a cadence on the third beat of the bar. According to Grove Online: Instrumental polaccas are often showy and ornate, gaining in brilliance what they lose in national character.

<sup>8</sup> While this concerto was likely unknown to Goldmark due to the curious events surrounding its composition, Brahms, who was around Schumann at the time of its composition, and Joseph Joachim, its dedicatee, were both aware of it. Goldmark knew both men, and was in regular and unreserved contact with Brahms. It remains a curious possibility that some mention of the concerto could have been made.

<sup>9</sup> Goldmark's own student, Jean Sibelius, whom he taught briefly from 1890-1891 may have gone through a similar thought process when he composed a polacca/bolero finale to his own violin concerto.

biggest push toward his career, characterize a desire to extend the reach of the much-loved Mendelssohn past his untimely death. Why, then, would the blatant structural and stylistic similarities in Goldmark's string quintet to that of Schubert's not be taken advantage of in the same way?<sup>10</sup> A rather selective comparison. Goldmark continued only in the tradition of Mendelssohn as much as the likes of Smetana and Dvořák. Goldmark's tacit refusal to throw his style wholly into the new wildness of Wagner is perhaps seen as his reassertion of the tradition and style of Mendelssohn, but this ultimately overlooks his role in the overall long march of development of many genres. Goldmark's works are simply a step in the evolution of the concert overture, the symphonic poem, the romantic concerto, and just as important to the historical context of these forms as any other pieces. Mendelssohn revolutionized with his *midsummer night's dream* overture, using the orchestration to convey characters and atmospheres from the story, but was this solely *his* purview? Does writing in this way make Liszt Mendelssohnian?

Liszt's prolific time in Weimar, widely considered the birth of the symphonic poem must have been as much of an influence on Goldmark as Mendelssohn and Beethoven. It was here that he uttered the famous phrase, "new wine demands new bottles." Goldmark's music was programmed on many occasions alongside Liszt's and Goldmark would have been familiar with much of the older composer's work. Coupled with his exposure to "much of... Berlioz," which taught Goldmark, "many new possibilities of the orchestra,"<sup>xix</sup> these encounters would also have taught Goldmark a great deal about the use of motives in thematic transformation, and

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<sup>10</sup> While further explanation would be veering a bit too far from the topic, take a listen to both quintets back-to-back and you may be shocked!

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the style of their symphonic poems and overtures certainly made an impact on those of Goldmark.

Goldmark's tone poems are more evocative of a general atmosphere, and cater less to a narrative form, following in the tradition of Berlioz. Goldmark had a wide collection of symphonic poems and concert overtures, among them his *Sakuntala* overture, *Im Frühling*, *Sappho*, *Penthesilea*, *In Italien*, *Aus Jugendtagen*, and *Zrinyi*.<sup>11</sup> These compositions are uniquely positioned in the development of the concert overture into the grand tone poem which was to be the signature of Richard Strauss, toeing the line between the two. Goldmark, as evidenced by his quote of *Egmont* in the violin concerto, also knew Beethoven's concert overtures. Between these two influences, the emergence of a synthetic or ambiguous form is natural. This parallels the manner in which Goldmark embraced some of Wagner's harmonic language while retaining some traditional formal structure in his compositions. This paradigm would also present itself in his operas.

As mentioned, Goldmark's operas were tinged with 'jewish-oriental' exoticism. In his most famous opera, *The Queen of Sheba*, once his calling-card, "[He] sought to place the queen as an Arabian Venus alongside a Jewish Tannhäuser.' The other principal characters can be traced back to the same Wagnerian model, with Sulamith as Elisabeth and Solomon as Wolfram von Eschenbach. At the same time, the work's historical subject matter, many large crowd and ensemble scenes, and ballet music show the style of French grand opera."<sup>xx</sup> This opera was bitterly repudiated by Johann Herbeck, then director of the Vienna Court Opera. According to

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<sup>11</sup> A Hungarian folk hero. Liszt composed tone poems about similar figures.

him, "All the laws of harmony had been ignored!"<sup>xxi</sup> Decidedly unmendelssohnian. In writing *The Queen*, Goldmark claims he was, "Guided solely by the story and what was needed to interpret it."<sup>xxii</sup> Here again we see more of an influence of Liszt or Berlioz.

Bearing this all in mind, perhaps it would be better for us and for Goldmark's still-tenuous legacy if we should consider his place with a broader view of history, contextually, materially, and forgo the idealism of succession. Goldmark comments on Beethoven that, "one cannot do justice to great intellects unless they are studied throughout their entire artistic development, and also their place in history."<sup>xxiii</sup> Goldmark may be no Beethoven, and he would have been the first to admit it, but he deserves this respect. Goldmark's wine simply does not fit into the bottles of Mendelssohn. From his one intimate meeting with Liszt, Goldmark could recall only one single saying. "A composition for the concert stage... will live longer than any other. It is heard less frequently, and therefore does not become commonplace."<sup>xxiv</sup> perhaps this is good for Goldmark. It leaves his violin concerto as a sparkling gem, uncovered now and again to delight a new generation.

- <sup>i</sup> Goldmark, 21.
- <sup>ii</sup> Ibid, 40
- <sup>iii</sup> Ibid, 103
- <sup>iv</sup> Ibid, 94
- <sup>v</sup> Ibid, 102
- <sup>vi</sup> Ibid, 107
- <sup>vii</sup> Ibid, 134
- <sup>viii</sup> Hunt
- <sup>ix</sup> Goldmark, X
- <sup>x</sup> Ibid, 139
- <sup>xi</sup> Ibid, 208
- <sup>xii</sup> Figures A and B
- <sup>xiii</sup> Figures C, D, E, and F
- <sup>xiv</sup> One such chart is included. Figure G.
- <sup>xv</sup> Figures H and I
- <sup>xvi</sup> Figures J and K
- <sup>xvii</sup> Walker, 308.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Jacobson
- <sup>xix</sup> Goldmark, 114
- <sup>xx</sup> Brodbeck, 502
- <sup>xxi</sup> Goldmark, 219
- <sup>xxii</sup> Ibid, 209
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Ibid, 113
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Ibid, 204

Figure A shows a musical score for piano and violin. The piano part features a melodic line with dynamic markings including *pp*, *dim.*, *pizz.*, and *arco*. The violin part is marked *pp* and includes *pizz.* and *arco* markings. The tempo is indicated as *sehr kurz*.

Figure A

Figure B shows a musical score for woodwinds and strings. The woodwind parts (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon) and string parts are marked with a piano dynamic (*p*). The woodwinds have some melodic lines, while the strings play a rhythmic accompaniment.

Figure B

Figure C shows a musical score for piano and woodwinds. The piano part is marked *pp* and features a complex rhythmic pattern. The woodwind parts (oboe, clarinet, bassoon) are marked *p* and provide harmonic support.

Figure C

Figure D shows a musical score for woodwinds and strings. The woodwind parts (flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon) and string parts are marked with a piano dynamic (*p*). The woodwinds have melodic lines, and the strings play a rhythmic accompaniment.

Figure D

Note the syncopated rhythms in the strings



Figure E

Figure F

Note the 8<sup>th</sup> notes in the strings

Mendelssohn	Goldmark
Solo line in begins almost immediately. No tutti introduction.	21 bars of Magyar march <sup>1</sup>
Mostly uninterrupted until m47 mm. 47-76 29 bars of tutti. Winds and strings play theme together followed by secondary theme m. 77 Violin enters to continue where strings leave it	mm. 22-70 49 measures of uninterrupted violin Ended with march figure continued for 3 bars by orchestra.
mm. 97-112 ~28 measures of virtuosic triplets followed by 18 measure transition 8 <sup>th</sup> note section and quarter note section to B section at m. 131	mm. 73-94 Virtuosic triplet section followed by sixteenth note section for 22 measures followed by an <u>11 measure</u> transition to B section at m.106  106 E MINOR rhythmic underpinning reminiscent of Mendelssohn opening
mm. 131-168 37 bars, high sustained climax m. 165	44 bars, high sustained climax, significantly longer
mm. 168-209 Virtuosic section followed by triumphant restatement of theme material mm.211-224  mm. 224-239 secondary theme material  mm. 239-262 25 measures of transitional 8 <sup>th</sup> note <u>material followed</u> by 27 measures of sequential theme material transitioning to cadenza  mm. 351-	Virtuosic section of similar length followed by 51 bars of orchestral fugue section then triumphant restatement of march material    Meandering sequential 8 <sup>th</sup> note section to recapitulation

Figure G

Figure H is a musical score for a section of Goldmark's *Passim*. It features a woodwind section with parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Horns (Hörner), and Trumpets (Trompeten). The string section includes Violins I (V1), Violins II (V2), Violas (V3), Cellos (V4), and Double Basses (V5). The score is written in a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a 3/4 time signature. The woodwinds play a melodic line with some grace notes, while the strings provide a rhythmic accompaniment.

Figure H

Figure I is a musical score for a single woodwind instrument, likely a flute or piccolo. It is written in a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a 3/4 time signature. The score shows a melodic line with a series of eighth notes, followed by a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo).

Figure I

Figure J and K are musical scores for a section of Goldmark's *Passim*. Figure J is the string section, and Figure K is the piccolo part. The string section is marked *Tranquillo* and *pp* (pianissimo). The piccolo part is marked *Flauto piccolo.* and *ppp* (pianississimo). The score is written in a key signature of two sharps (D major) and a 3/4 time signature. The strings play a rhythmic accompaniment, while the piccolo plays a melodic line. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *ppp*, and *dim.* (diminuendo).

Figure J

Figure K



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