Gustav Mahler’s *Adagietto from Symphony No. 5* is a Romantic work in F Major from a five movement symphony, one more movement than the traditional symphonies of the past. Gustav creates interest in this movement with his melodic coloration, dissonances, and occasional rhythmic and harmonic complexities.

Mahler uses many different techniques for embellishing his melodic lines and his progressions. The use of non-harmonic tones is prevalent throughout the piece. In the first melodic line you can see a passing tone in the first three notes, and in measure three there is an appoggiatura. A more drastic example appears in the score at measure 59. As Mahler approaches the key change, the first violins play faster note values with increasing amounts of non-harmonic tones, totaling 9 from measure 59 through 62 in just the first violin part.

Suspensions are a part of some of the main melodies in the *Adagietto*. In measure 9 you can hear a suspension in the first violin part, which is held for 6 beats until it moves up to an a, then descends a sixth, which gives a minor amount of relief, but neither it, nor the second violin, which also plays a role in this suspension, is completely resolved, which leaves the listener wanting a complete resolution.

Dissonances are not prevalent in this mostly diatonic work, though a few create more interest in the piece. The dissonances are very quick and are usually a leading tone to the next pitch in the melody. In measures 61 and 62 in the first violin, beginning on the second half of the third beat, there is an upward set of three eighth notes, with only the second being a consonant pitch. This majority of dissonant pitches steals the listener’s
attention from any other thoughts, but is not so consistently dissonant that the listener is completely confused.

Rhythms in *Adagietto* are not overly complicated. Mahler plays with grouping of the notes by creating hemiola from measure 96 through 99. He begins m.96 in the first violin with a grouping of two, then ties a half note to a quarter over the bar line creating a group of 3 quarters, then groups the rest of the measure as 3 independent quarters. This grouping is continued with a dotted half note, then returns to a grouping of two as it moves down to an F. Nearly the same pattern occurs in the Bass and Violoncello starting at measure 95 and continuing through 98.

The harmonic rhythm of *Adagietto* is fairly constant with a chord change each measure. During his passages which stay fairly constant, there are brief bouts of a longer chord being held. In measure fifteen through 20 the chord changes once per measure, but at measure 21 an a minor chord is held for 3 measures, followed by an F Major chord for another two. A later example of the held notes is at measure 95, where Mahler stays on an F64 chord for 5 measures until it moves to a C7, the dominant of the key, then resolves 2 measures later on F.

In conclusion, Mahler’s *Adagietto* from *Symphony No. 5* is a clearly diatonic piece which creates suspense though melodic coloration, non-harmonic tones, and interesting rhythms melodically as well as a stable, but unique harmonic rhythm and progression.