Section 1
Death and the Canon: Classical Entanglements of Death, Grief and Perspective

The essays in the first section of the collection focus on composers whose pieces fall under the umbrella of ‘classical’ music, namely Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) and Gustav Mahler (1860–1911). Death was a constant companion during their compositional lifetimes. For example, all three composers had children who died in infancy and/or early childhood. In the first chapter, ‘Permeating the membrane: Death as life-fulfilment through the prism of Bach’s Ich habe genug (BWV 82)’, Gary Levy examines the peaceful acceptance of death offered via the composer’s setting of the anonymous text to music. He also deliberates on the reasons for the continuing popularity of this oft-recorded cantata. In the second chapter, ‘Mozart’s Music in Film: Death and Embodied Affect’, Marie Josephine Bennett considers how specific works by Mozart are employed in three different movies to highlight the music and death nexus present in each filmic narrative. As she argues, in each of the films analysed, a piece of music by the composer is connected to death and embodied affect. In the final chapter of this section, ‘Mahler’s Second Symphony: Intuitively Embodying Grief and Dying’, Benjamin Lassauzet proposes that Mahler instinctively demonstrated the 5-stage model of approaching death illustrated by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in 1969 within his Symphony No. 2, first performed in 1895. As Lassauzet suggests, in some ways, one could claim that the grief model was conceived via Mahler’s composition, rather than through the text of Kübler-Ross.