

Martin Ellerby

SYMPHONY IN FIVE MOVEMENTS

Commissioned by The Wind Ensemble at Lehigh University and David B. Diggs and made possible by the Ronald J. Ulrich Commissioning Fund

- 1: Intrada (Mosaic)
- 2: Episode I (Scherzo for Wind, Percussion & Friends)
- 3: Thanksgiving (The Last Communion)
- 4: Episode II (Scherzo for Brass, Percussion & Friends)
- 5: Alla Marcias (Montage)

The work focusses on the arch structure suggested by the five individual movements. As a basic principle, aiming for a piece of a total duration of 20 minutes which is all linked together to form a whole, we can reach the following (in time terms and movement relationship terms) plan:

- 1: Lively at 4 minutes (full scoring) – acting as an overture or introduction
- 2: First scherzo at 2.30 minutes (focussing on the wind section with mainly tuned percussion)
- 3: Slow at 7 minutes (full scoring) – utilising a series of solos for specific instruments
- 4: Second scherzo at 2.30 minutes (focussing on the brass section with mainly mallet percussion)
- 5: Lively at 4 minutes (full scoring) – acting as a finale or summation

1 and 5 are related in time and tempo terms as are 2 and 4 leaving 3 to act independently as a more considered central slow movement.

The fact that the work is in five movements also suggests the use of the interval of a fifth or its inversion a fourth and by association diminished fifth and/or augmented fourth. This should not be regarded as a pedantic point but one to think about when designing the material for each movement.

Also the key structure is related, again if not in a pedantic manner, and in terms more of tonality than 'majors' and 'minors', so we arrive at:

- 1: B flat – tonic (home)
- 2: B flat 'journeying' its way to F - dominant
- 3: D – mediant (a 'brighter' mid-distance key, a third up from B flat and a third down from F)
- 4: F – dominant – (preparing to return home)
- 5: B flat – tonic (home)

The basic overall tonality has certainly been influenced by the Symphony in B flat by Paul

Hindemith to whom the work is a kind of homage as it combines (as Hindemith's own music does) a mixture of the technically academic and the purely musical, hopefully married together to provide a satisfying and convincing musical experience for a broad listening public. The term 'symphony' has enabled the music to be conceived in a 'symphonic' sense ie pithy ideas or cells growing/developing into larger phrases and extensions of those initial 'pregnant' motifs. Therefore the pacing of the individual movements and their place in the overall design is crucial to both the composition and performance of the work.

1: Intrada (Mosaic)

The subtitle 'Intrada' of course refers to an opening movement. The bracketed 'Mosaic' refers to the structure which passes 'to and fro' three contrasting ideas all maintaining the same tempo:

One – a 'first' subject – a pithy idea built on perfect fourths in contrary motion, rhythmic and percussive.

Two – an 'intervening' subject – a twelve note row in unison or octave writing built solely on intervals of fourths and fifths and losing a note on each reoccurrence, always the 'last' note. This is NOT atonal in its aural effect!

Three – a 'second' subject – more flowing and lyrical – the fourth and fifth intervals are more 'hidden' and its effect is intended to aspire towards longer more emotional pastures.

The rehearsal letters are placed to indicate (principally for the conductor) where the various subjects make their entrances and can be described thus:

1: Start - 1st Subject – 13 bars

2: [A] – 12 Note Row (12 notes) – 3 bars

3: [B] - 1st Subject – 2 bars

4: [C] - 2nd Subject – 10 bars

5: [D] - 1st Subject – 2 bars

6: [E] – 12 Note Row (11 notes) – 2 bars

7: [F] - 1st Subject – 5 bars

8: [G] – 12 Note Row (10 notes) – 2 bars

9: [H] - 1st Subject – 1 bar

10: [I] - 2nd Subject – 9 bars

11: [J] – 12 Note Row (9 notes) – 2 bars

12: [K] - 1st Subject – 11 bars

13: [L] – 12 Note Row (8 notes) – 4 bars

14: [M] - 2nd Subject – 7 bars

15: [N] – 12 Note Row (7 notes) – 2 bars

16: [O] - 1st Subject – 1 bar

17: [P] – 12 Note Row (6 notes) – 3 bars

18: [Q] - 2nd Subject – 10 bars

19: [R] - 1st Subject – 2 bars

20: [S] – 12 Note Row (5 notes) – 4 bars

21: [T] - 1st Subject – 12 bars

22: [U] – 12 Note Row (4 notes) – 1 bar

23: [V] - 2nd Subject – 6 bars

24: [W] - 1st Subject – 1 bar

25: [X] – 12 Note Row (3 notes) – 1 bar

26: [Y] - 1st subject – 1 bar

27: [Z] – 12 Note Row (2 notes) – 1 bar

28: [AA] - 1st Subject – 1 bar

29: [BB} – Fughetta based on the 12 note row tonally harmonised. In effect it starts with the final appearance of the 12 Note Row (1 note) but then 'rebels' determined to have its day with a longer line – 8 bars

30: [CC] - 1st Subject – 13 bars – rallentando into:

31: [DD] – Coda – based on 12 note row and rhythmic aspect of 1st subject – 7 bars – poco a poco accelerando to close.

There are the following number of appearances of the 3 ideas:

1st Subject – 13 & Coda

'Intervention' Subject – 12 & Coda

2nd Subject – 5

Total number of bars: 147

N.B. You will glean from this the idea of a mosaic for the structure. It was conceived as an 'intellectual' concept and executed 'musically' so there should be, from the listeners perspective, no sense of a disjointed music. For information I can disclose that I was influenced by the Third Piano

Sonata by Michael Tippett for the structure of this opening movement.

2: Episode I (Scherzo for Wind, Percussion & Friends)

The idea of the two episodes is to introduce, between more dense ones, brief movements focussing firstly on the Wind section (with tuned percussion plus a few extras – the 'friends') and secondly on the Brass section (with mallet percussion plus some 'friends'). They are highly contrasting and the only real relationship is their positions in the overall work and the subtitles of 'scherzo'. The Wind scherzo is classically conceived and the Brass scherzo in a more contemporary, jazz influenced idiom.

The structural concept of the 1st Episode is to repeat the initial material in shorter time spans and contrast is provided by this material being workable in in both simple and compound time which also compress on repetition. Throughout a crotchet or a dotted crotchet equals 200 and listeners should not feel any change in the aural tempo.

1: SECTION ONE (4/4) – bar 1 to 51 inclusive: 1 minute

2: SECTION TWO (12/8) – bar 52 to 85 inclusive: 0.45 seconds

3: SECTION THREE (3/4) – bar 86 to 119 inclusive: 0.30 seconds

4: SECTION FOUR (9/8) – bar 120 to 135 inclusive: 0.15 seconds

5: SECTION FIVE – CODA – written in 6/8 but aurally combining 2/4 as a final rhythmic compression and placing (aurally and intellectually) simple and compound time together: - bar 136 to 143 inclusive to end. N.B. The final bars are 'throwaway' to emphasise the 'interlude' nature of the movement within a larger framework.

3: Thanksgiving (The Last Communion)

The central slow movement is written in a free style where melodic lines are encouraged to engage themselves in a lyrical manner and not concern themselves with any complex structural issues. In the Church of St John the Evangelist, Altrincham, Cheshire, UK there are an impressive series of stained glass windows. For a local parish church this is unusual in itself, however more unusual is one of the windows in particular. Within a traditional stained glass church window is featured, dressed in theatrical armour, Captain Norman Briggs Antrobus. He had been a student of electro-chemistry in Manchester and joined the 4th South Lancashire Regiment. He was shot and killed at the age of 22 by a German sniper in the Great War as his company was digging a new trench in Flanders in 1915. The window (which has two panels) was put in the church by his parents and dates from 1916. In the right hand panel is the face of Norman taken from a photograph of him. He is accompanied in the left hand panel by a vicar giving communion. Circling above the adjacent panels is a circling halo depicting the cap badge of his regiment. At the bottom there is some religious text taken from St John's Gospel which reads: 'Do this in remembrance of Me, The Master is come and calleth for Thee'. The whole window is locally referred to as 'The Last Communion'. As, I believe is the case, 'Thanksgiving' is a big event in the calendar of Pennsylvania and is widely celebrated there. This gave me a link between myself as composer and the commissioning body. The movement is presented as a 'ceremony' and unfolds gently opening with 'Last Post' quasi bugle calls followed by solos over 'chorale' type accompaniments and ensemble climaxes etc. The full structural breakdown is as follows:

- 1: Introduction with echoing 'Last Post' figures in trumpets – solo HORN is featured over rich textures: the key of D Major is being established and its dominant reached by bar 8.
- 2: [A] - 1st Subject in solo COR ANGLAIS over brass choral style accompaniment. Key: D Major.
- 3: [B] - 1st subject in solo CLARINET 'repeated' over sax choir style accompaniment. Key: D Major.
- 4: [C] - 2nd Subject, a brass chorale. Key: F Major.
- 5: [D] - 1st Subject, briefly in WW with brass choir style accompaniment. Key: D Major.
- 6: [E] - 2nd Subject brass chorale repeated with WW embellishments. Key: B flat Major.
- 7: [F] – WW have new 'snap' idea above brass chorale. Key: E flat Major.
- 8: [G] - 1st Subject in solo ALTO SAX becoming ALTO SAXES duet over lower WW chords and higher WW 'snaps' (later trumpets) with flowing vibraphone and other percussion. Key: E flat Major.
- 9: Bar 50 - 1st Subject in WW over brass. Key: C Major.
- 10: [H] - 2nd Subject with counter subject to move on. Key: A Major.
- 11: [I] – A climax is reached and wound down from. Key: F Major to D Minor.
- 12: [J] - 1st Interlude featuring solo FLUTE then FLUTE and PICCOLO duet over gentle, more transparent, textures. Key: D Major to A Minor.
- 13: [K] - 1st Subject developed using imitative entries building to a climax. Key: D Major.
- 14: [L] – Climax is reached by an abrupt modulation the wound down. Key: ambiguous but ending in A Minor.
- 15: [M] - 2nd Interlude featuring solo TUBULAR BELLS based on 1st Subject – rapid figurations elsewhere deliver an air of tension – eventually the 'Last Post' returns in echoing Trumpets repeated in unison Flutes and Glockenspiel. Key: D Major but with an ambiguity about it.
- 16: [N] – CODA with solo COR ANGLAIS returning with a new 3rd Subject over which a PICCOLO counter subject is presented – the mood is funereal. Key: D Minor.
- 17: [O] – Coda continues re-introducing 'snap' motifs from previous passages towards a soft conclusion and final statement of the 'Last Post'. Key D Major.

4: Episode II (Scherzo for Brass, Percussion & Friends)

The 2nd Episode is built around a 4 bar figure of descending time signatures: 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, and 1/4 BUT the 2/4 and 1/4 bars are notated together as 3/4 for ease of execution. Here the emphasis is on rhythm, even in the melodic lines, and the overall effect is thoroughly 'percussive'. It works out

thus:

- 1: 4 bar introduction purely in the percussion suggesting a rhythm section. This leads into:
- 2: 1st Subject – muted trumpets and trombones over the rhythm section assisted by pizzicato Double Bass, Timpani and Piccolo interjections.
- 3: [A] - 1st subject repeated in developed form in saxophones, horns, euphonium and tubas – other parts re-enter.
- 4: Bar 16 - 1st Subject repeated with original scoring and adjustments.
- 5: [B] - 1st Subject repeated as at [A] scoring with adjustments.
- 6: Bar 28 – a bridge passage centred on rhythm section using intro idea.
- 7: [C] - 1st Subject with metrical adjustments and active piccolo line high above over original scoring then [A] scoring.
- 8: Bar 46 – a bridge passage using intro idea.
- 9: [D] - 1st Subject with high piccolo but now adding counter-subject in alto saxes and horns.
- 10: [E] - 2nd Subject – presented as a conversational tutti, agitated and dance like to contrast.
- 11: Bar 58 – a bridge passage using intro idea and adding timpani solo.
- 12: [F] – as at [D] but counter subject made to move on.
- 13: Bar 65 - 2nd Subject repeated but reversed conversation.
- 14: [G] - 1st Subject material in original scoring followed by 2nd scoring at [H] but rhythmically adjusted to create tension and expectation.
- 15: [I] – previous [G] and [H] material repeated but rhythmically curtailed for tension purposes.
- 16: [J] – a bridge passage using intro idea in a spartan way to create relaxation.
- 17: [K] – build up material using canonic or imitative scale passages over intro idea: first in 'softer' saxes then in 'harder' brasses who are now 'open'.
- 18: [M] – CODA in 3 parts – (a): the 1st Subject turns into a celebratory fanfare. (b): Bar 96 – a bridge passage (maintaining tension) on the [K] idea (in stretto style) but combining all elements. (c): 1st Subject fanfare repeated inverted with added horns and saxes and into positive conclusion. There is a silent pause at the end to hold the moment and emphasise the briefness of this movement, its episodic placement and character.

5: Alla Marcias (Montage)

The subtitle refers to the use of things related to the 'March' and the bracketed element that they are to be treated in the form of a montage. There follow some comments that might be useful when

interpreting what on the surface could appear as an *ad hoc* collection of unrelated sections! Until the Coda is reached the music remains in four beats to a bar (either in 4/4 or 12/8 and in the same aural metre) allowing that famous 'four-square' pulse to more than establish itself. The tonality begins and ends in B flat – the key of the Symphony – though makes some excursions over the course of its brief journey.

1: Opening – 'getting started' – the 'warm up' parody – establishing the 'beat' and providing an air of expectancy.

2: [D] – here we are 'on the move' – gaining in confidence and intensity.

3: [F] – 'getting cocky with it'.

4: [G] – a somewhat British style RVW folk music parody in march idiom.

5: [I] – the 'bass solo' parody starting with just WW basses and then adding brass basses.

6: [J] – a theatre/music hall march parody.

7: [K] – 'strutting their stuff'.

8: [L] – the 'trio section' parody.

9: [M] – a brief fanfare (march bridge passage) parody.

10: [N] – a 'pipes and drums' parody – the 4/4 is exchanged for 12/8 though the four beat pulse remains the same. A second side drum joins the first to accentuate the rhythm and they should be antiphonally placed within the band set up.

11: [O] – a brief chorale (march style) parody – now back in 4/4 though there are a few triplets to remind us of the previous 12/8 feel.

12: [P] – the 'pipes and drums' music is now focussed on the basses and back in 12/8.

13: [Q] – a 'school hymn' parody – guess whose?! - finding the tonic (the key signature of B flat, not seen since the opening pages returns) and we are back into 4/4. The undercurrent (2 side drums) reminds us of the close of the 1st movement.

14: [R] – CODA: no stopping now – all hands to the deck for the Big Finish! The tempo is put up a gear and the beats per bar shortened to three (3/4) until the last few bars where 4/4 is found (through a bar of 2/4) and the rhythm of the 1st movement ending is revisited to end the work in triumph and provide an absolute conclusion.

The key scheme (or tonal centres) – which when writing only had to begin and end in B flat - is as follows:

1: B flat Major (home)

2: C Major

3: G Major

4: G Minor

5: A Minor (with excursions)

6: C Major (with excursions)

- 7: G Major
- 8: E flat Major
- 9: E Major
- 10: B flat Major (home)

Martin Ellerby – Altrincham, Cheshire, UK, January 2017