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The symphonies of Robert Simpson

Pickard, John Lawrence

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THE SYMPHONIES OF ROBERT SIMPSON

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John Lawrence Pickard

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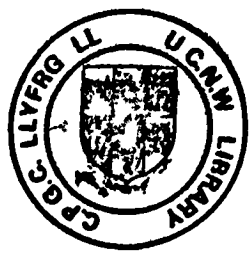

Summary

Writing in 1970 of Robert Simpson's music, Hugh Ottaway said, "Simpson's ideal is a Beethovenian dynamism and comprehensiveness, an active unity in which powerful forces are embraced and subdued: a sense of re-engagement with the humanist mainstream, clear-headed and unsentimental is implicit in everything he writes."

Simpson's dogged musical integrity has resulted in a high degree of consistency and homogeneity in his compositional development. But in the thirty-seven years that he has been writing symphonies his approach to the ideals mentioned by Ottaway has deepened in strength and subtlety and his achievement has steadily increased in breadth and power.

This dissertation traces his development as a symphonist. The discussion of Symphonies 1-3 demonstrates how their dynamic approach to tonality is expressed in terms of sustained key-conflict. Particularly close attention is given to the Third Symphony - probably the finest of the three.

From the early 1970s onwards a change is detectable in the way in which Simpson organises his music. Emphasis upon key-conflict gives way to a concern with the generative powers of certain intervals and the analyses of the symphonies from No.4 onwards reflect the increasing concentration with which Simpson derives his material from a small group of intervals.

The analytical approach to each work is essentially a narrative one in keeping with the organic manner in which Simpson's music grows.

The dissertation ends with a brief commentary upon Symphony No.10 which, at the time of writing has only just been completed and remains unperformed.

NOTE

The contents of this volume should be consulted in conjunction with the musical illustrations which constitute Volume II of the dissertation.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I should like to thank Dr. Jeffrey Lewis, my supervisor, for his continued interest and painstaking monitoring of this project, often at considerable inconvenience to his own work. The carefully considered and always positive nature of his criticisms have been a constant source of inspiration.

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My thanks also go to Angela Simpson and to Martin Anderson whose work forms the basis of the List of Compositions and Discography respectively.

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Llanfairfechan, February 1989.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION - ANALYTICAL AIMS AND METHODS

Throughout his compositional career two forms have dominated Robert Simpson's music - the String Quartet (12) and the Symphony (10). In both cases, the composition of these works has stretched right across the forty years that he has been writing music, though, bearing in mind the nineteen year gap between Quartet No.3 (1954) and No.4 (1973), it could be argued that the Symphonies represent a more evenly balanced account of his musical development.

The purpose of this study is to trace the development of Simpson's symphonic style by close study of each of his Symphonies and one chapter is devoted to each of them. The account of Symphony No.10 is much briefer and more cursory than that of the others. This is due to the fact that, at the time of writing, it has only just been completed and is unperformed. It would be invidious to present a full-scale analysis of the work on the basis of such a brief period of assimilaton, so a short account is included in the interests of completeness.

The analytical approach employed is very straightforward - each chapter is a narrative account of the music as it proceeds. This is by far the most appropriate way of dealing with these works and there are a number of reasons for this. Simpson himself is a distinguished writer on other composers and his books on the music of Nielsen and Bruckner are probably

the most authoritative in the English language. In both of these works (as in his other publications) the analytical style is also a narrative one - the techniques involved are elucidated as the music unfolds. Such an approach, though, by no means the only feasible analytical method, is certainly the most comprehensive when dealing with the symphonic technique with which Simpson's writings, and also this study, are concerned. The principle advantage of the approach is that it enables one to admit discussion of any aspect of technique at almost any point, the form of the analysis being governed by the way in which the music unfolds. Consequently, it is unnecessary to compartmentalise each aspect of the musical technique (e.g. thematic development, tonal organisation, orchestration etc.) into separate categories - such an approach would, in fact, be wholly detrimental to the spirit of the music under discussion.

The very nature of Simpson's music lies in its sense of movement, growth and continuous development. Simpson's method of working is to begin at the beginning and go through to the end. He says, "Composing a large work is usually started from a small idea which is then allowed to proliferate under sharp discipline; as it proliferates, it undergoes metamorphosis so that the continuity is (one hopes) organic. The whole thing is really a process of controlled improvisation on paper."[1]. Naturally enough, this method of working has a profound effect on the substance of the music itself and this should be

reflected in the analytical approach employed. Simpson refers to his technique as 'improvisation' and allowing an idea to 'proliferate'. But it is the qualifying references to 'control' and 'sharp discipline' which are particularly significant and it will become clear in the following chapters that the progress of each work relies on constant reference to its opening material and consideration of the ways in which that material undergoes change and development.

The ways in which the material is disciplined are the main concern of this study and it will be seen that the emphasis on how material is organised has changed over the years. The first three Symphonies share, as the basis of their dynamism and unusual structural strength, a similar concern with the large-scale use of conflicting tonalities, the Fourth sets its own highly individual challenge of writing a 'Beethovenian' symphony following the classical outline of keys for each movement, while the Fifth is structured around a single chord. The remaining Symphonies have seen the emphasis shift away from concern with conventional tonality and an increasing awareness of the generative and integrating powers of a limited number of intervals when used to build a large-scale structure and this concern is traced in each of the chapters.

Although each chapter should, to some extent, function as a self-contained account of the Symphony under discussion, it is nevertheless necessary to outline specific aspects of

Simpson's style to begin with and to say something about his concerns and influences as a composer.

Note

1. Tonic, Vol.2 No.1, p.9

SIMPSON'S MUSICAL STYLE

i. Influences

Much has been said of Simpson's dislike of the music of Schoenberg. He himself has said that: "I would like to maroon my greatest enemy on that over-populated desert island with the music of Schoenberg, although I suspect he might enjoy the experience".[1] However, it was listening to a performance of Schoenberg's Piano Concerto in the 'forties which apparently clarified the direction he felt his music ought to take. As he later wrote: "Schoenberg's music happens to express (with great precision) a certain state of consciousness... Some states of mind are more comprehensive than others, and this is the criterion by which I would evaluate the relative achievements of artists of comparable talent".[2] The essential word in this passage is 'comprehensive' and it is a search for comprehensiveness which lies at the heart of Simpson's philosophy. This affects his attitude to life as well as to music and the integrity which he displays in his attitude to the world (e.g. his resignation from the B.B.C. in protest at the Corporation's intolerably declining standards, or his life-long and active commitment to the Peace Movement) finds natural expression in his music.

Paradoxically, Simpson's 'comprehensiveness' is achieved partly by excision of certain elements. His historical concerns exclude vast areas of nineteenth and twentieth century music (which is not to suggest for a moment that he is ignorant of them). In fact, what he is doing is what almost every creative artist does - to remove that which he considers unnecessary or as he puts it (in a different context): "...to remove, one by one disruptive or distracting elements, to seem to uncover, at length a last stratum of calm contemplative thought."[3]. In this respect it is worth observing that, in general, the more a composer is concerned with the idea of art as something to be controlled and disciplined (with, to use a cliche, the idea of 'craftsmanship') the more likely he is to deliberately exclude major areas from his creative consciousness as irrelevant to his concerns.

In his generous and humane personality the composer he most closely resembles is Carl Nielsen and in the fifties Simpson was almost single-handedly responsible for creating interest in Nielsen's work in this country. His first encounter with Nielsen's music came in 1951 when he was half-way through his First Symphony. The experience had such an effect that it stopped him composing for six months and, indeed, the final secton of the work does show traces of the influence of Nielsen's Sinfonia Espansiva. The superficial correspondences have often been noted: "[the] rocking thirds and running scale passages, together with their 'progressive tonality' hail from

Nielsen"[4]. and Simpson would certainly not deny them, believing that "one should be proud of one's influences". However, the true relationship between the two composers exists at a much more profound level than that of shared stylistic features. They have in common a desire for objectivity in their art which eschews sentimentality and over-inflated musical gesture and instead embraces clear-headedness and economy of expression.

The qualities which Simpson finds in Nielsen and to which he responds creatively correspond to his burning identification with Beethoven's music. Beethoven has remained Simpson's lifelong passion and his influence is to be felt in almost everything Simpson composes. What he has particularly learned from Beethoven is the control of pace in music and the ability to express energy with a power which few composers have equalled in this century. A number of Simpson's compositions reflect the influence of specific works of Beethoven. The Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Quartets are the clearest examples, each constituting "a close study" of one of Beethoven's Rasumovsky Quartets, Op.59 - the results being constructed by a process of analogy. Elsewhere, the first movement of Symphony No.3 and the Scherzo of Symphony No.4 relate closely to the corresponding movements of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. In matters of actual sound, passages like the series of 6/3 chords on the first page of Symphony No.3's second movement are identified as specifically Beethovenian in character, whilst the original version of the slow movement of Simpson's Fourth

Symphony came very close to the harmonic and melodic language of the slow movement of Beethoven's Ninth (in the revision this allusion has been drastically reduced).

Another life-long influence has been that of Bach and this is most notably felt in Simpson's mastery of counterpoint and, especially, fugue. Fugal writing abounds in virtually all of Simpson's works, from the monumental fugato which closes the First Symphony to the 'Grosse Fuge' which constitutes the finale of the Tenth (though this probably has more to do with late Beethovenian models than with Bach). However, the first part of Symphony No.9 is constructed as a kind of Chorale-Prelude with statements of a chorale-like theme constantly punctuating the polyphonic texture. This is a conscious tribute to Bach, though the polyphonic style is so deeply absorbed into Simpson's musical personality as to have become an entirely natural and unforced means of expression.

Simpson's fondness for and insight into Bruckner's music is well-known from his major book **The Essence of Bruckner**. However, it is only recently that Simpson has said that he was consciously aware of that composer's influence. This occurs with the Ninth Symphony and the general Brucknerian influence affected what Simpson describes as "it's deliberation of movement". But a specific influence also exists in the allusion during the work's first section to the opening movement of Bruckner's Third Symphony. It is not a copy of Bruckner's

original, but a tribute to it. Elsewhere, the actual influence of Bruckner is not to be found in Simpson's work, with the possible exception of the central section of the First Symphony. Simpson denies the conscious influence of Bruckner here, but the arching string lines and the harmonic purity of this passage are strongly Brucknerian in character.

Simpson has quoted directly from a number of composers from time to time in his music - either as the basis of variations (the Haydn Variations for piano and also the Ninth Quartet, the Nielsen Variations for orchestra and the 'Introduction and Allegro on a bass by Max Reger' for brass band) or actually within the texture of a work. The use of Bruckner's Third Symphony has already been mentioned (and this was not exactly a 'direct' quotation) but his use of a fragment of the first movement of Haydn's Symphony No.76 in the scherzo of his Fourth Symphony is unique in his output. His subjection of Haydn's little tune to increasingly violent assaults was, the composer insists, "not done for any occult reason" and it was "the naivety of the tune as well as the key" which suited his purpose ideally.[5].

In matters of scoring and spacing, the major influences seem to come from two rather unexpected sources, because Simpson does not care for either composer. He acknowledges a debt to Stravinsky in matters of spacing and admires that composer's ear for sonority - though in every other respect

Stravinsky's work is quite repellant to him. Like Stravinsky, Simpson has a predilection for wide-spaced chordal writing - often without any 'filling-in' in the middle. The other influence on this aspect of Simpson's work is perhaps unconscious: that of Shostakovich. This is particularly apparent in his wind writing which, like Shostakovich, frequently exploits the extremes of register of the woodwind section. His string writing bears some relationship to that of Shostakovich and it is significant and remarkable that both composers, though neither of them string players, have produced important cycles of string quartets.

ii) **Form**

Simpson says that he always attempts to make each symphony as different from the last as possible and it is inevitable that the first and most obvious way to go about that is in using a variety of large-scale structures. A number of the symphonies fall into more than one structural category, but it is nevertheless worth listing the kinds of form used:

1) Two symphonies employ a 'Classical' four-movement structure: Nos.4 and 10. Symphony No.8 also has four movements but arranged into two parts. Only one symphony uses a 'Classical' three-movement design: No.2.
2) Five symphonies are in one movement: Nos.1, 5, 6, 7 and 9.

Two of them are built over a single pulse: Nos.1 and 9
Three of them display some kind of structural symmetry or arch form: Nos.1, 5 and 9.

3) Two symphonies use a bi-partite construction: No.3 and No.8 (four movements with a pause only between the second and third).

From this list a great variety of structures will be perceived. It is also worth noting that the only one-movement symphony which involves a single process with no structural reference to earlier sections (i.e. the return of an earlier tempo later in the symphony) is No.6.

Within the large-scale structure a wide variety of smaller forms is to be found. In the earlier symphonies sonata form is the point of departure for the opening sections. Even the First Symphony contains elements of exposition of two 'subjects (opening and b.33), development (b.53) and recapitulation of the subjects in reverse order (b.136 and b.149). But it is in the Third Symphony which, in its opening movement, comes closest to resembling classical sonata form, due to its being modelled on the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Elsewhere, the influence of sonata design is not so strongly felt, though the first section of Symphony No.5 has a sense of sonata outline with the return of the opening tutti (b.279) acting as a recapitulation and structural climax to the movement.

Other 'Classical' forms occur from time to time: Scherzo and Trio in Symphony No.4 (though, again, based partly on a specific Beethoven model), Rondo in the finale of No.2 (offset by a massive coda) and a Baroque form, that of the Chorale-Prelude, in the first section of No.9.

Naturally, for a composer who is deeply concerned with continuous organic development, conventional sonata form can be a problematic *structure to handle, its notion of clear* recapitulation acting as a potential handicap to a continuously developing and changing musical argument. Haydn often manipulated sonata form to accomodate his own concept of organic development (most notably in his tendency to telescope first and second subjects into a single process of growth from a basic cell). However, the idea of varied recapitulation can be a useful means of reconciling the two techniques for it combines the concept of continuous growth with that of structurally satisfying reference to earlier material. This is an idea which Simpson appears to have enthusiastically embraced and the final sections of Symphonies 4, 5 and 8 all demonstrate this particular procedure: Nos. 4 and 5 both constructing the 'finale' as a varied recapitulation of the first section or movement and the finale of No.8 acting from b.395 as a varied recapitulation of itself.

In other words the sense of organic development has dictated the form. For instance the second movement of Symphony

No.3 and (to a lesser extent) the whole of Symphony No.6 can both be viewed as a gradual accelerando. In both cases, as in many of Simpson's other works, the sense of organic development is reflected in the tempo relationships, and it is in this respect that one can appreciate the importance of the procedure known as 'metrical modulation'. This occurs when a tempo is changed but the underlying pulse remains constant. For example, a 3/4 bar could be changed to a slower 3/4 bar in which the length of the crotchet equalled <u>three</u> quaver beats of the old tempo, thus retaining a common quaver pulse. Simpson would notate this as ♩ = ♩. del prec. In this way the possibilities for creating varied yet unified tempi will become apparent and it is clear that such a device can create a strong sense of continuity. Simpson employs this method in many of his works but the symphonies in which they play a particularly notable part are No.1, No.3 (mvt.2), No.6, No.8 (the finale being a particularly ambitious example) and No.9.

Such a device can, of course, accomodate another formal process simultaneously. For example, the fugue in the Ninth String Quartet involves a subject which undergoes constant metamorphosis at the same time as the music accelerates by a process of metrical modulation. Although Simpson has not yet attempted anything quite like that in one of his symphonies, there are instances of large-scale fugato writing in which the subject itself is in a constant state of evolution - the third

movement of the Eighth Symphony and the second part (after the scherzo) of the Ninth Symphony are examples.

In all of these cases Simpson has taken an existing form and made it very much his own by the addition of an individual feature (in this case the idea of the fugue subject undergoing constant evolution). A similarly individual approach underlies his use of other forms. Two symphonies employ variation technique: the second movement of No.2 and the build-up to the final climax of No.9. In both cases they happen also to be palindromic, but the thirteen variations which constitute the slow movement of Symphony No.2 create a single large palindrome, with the 'mirror' in the middle of the central variation, whereas the variations in Symphony No.9 are variations over a palindromic theme - the variations themselves are not strictly palindromic, only certain parts of the contrapuntal texture are palindromic (i.e. the theme as it runs through each of the variations). Similarly the two main canonic sections of Symphony No.5 fulfil another structural function in being complementary, the first canon breaking down the basic chord which underpins the work and the second one building it up again.

iii) **Tonality**

The matter of tonality is perhaps the most discussed but least understood aspect of Simpson's work. This is

unquestionably a consequence of Simpson's writings on other composers. His elucidation of the ways in which Beethoven, Bruckner, Nielsen and Sibelius handle tonality in their work has inevitably led to the assumption that Simpson is attempting the same thing in his own music. Confusion has been added by the fact that over the years Simpson's definition of tonality appears to have widened.

It may seem odd to speak of tonality in terms of 'definition', after all the simple incontrovertible fact that most human beings, when listening to a group of notes, seem to instinctively want to relate them to one single tone hardly seems to be a matter for definition. Simpson has always been at pains to stress that the sense of tonality is a natural function: "The human sense of tonality has many times been modified, but cannot be abolished. To attempt to abolish it is to cease to be comprehensive, to be narrowly exclusive."[6]. He also emphasises that his concern with tonality is intimately linked to his central obsession with music that is symphonic. He does not deny that other types of music exist and that they may not be reliant to the same extent (if at all) on tonality. However, he makes clear where he places symphonic music in relation to other types of music:

> "If a composer chooses deliberately to exclude, for example, a great natural resource like tonality, he at once excludes inclusiveness. He may bring off something expressive and individual, but he denies himself the kind of comprehensiveness that a symphony must have if we accept that it is to be the highest type of orchestral music (and, I think, history

commands us to insist upon this). If the term 'symphony' is to be the supreme challenge (and there does not seem to be any other accepted generic term of this sort), we must in composing symphonies ignore no basic response of the human mind, so far as elemental musical phenomena are concerned."[7].

In recent years Simpson has refined his definition of tonality in favour of a concentration upon intervals:

"Tonality is created by the resonances between pitches, the resonances of the intervals. There are many possibilities beyond the 'classical' tonality that evolved after the earlier modal complexes... the natural relations between pitches and resonances of intervals are themselves radically important and must be used positively, with a certain kind of energy, by anyone wishing to convey comprehensiveness...

There are no limits to the possibilities; they aren't confined to major and minor, nor even to 'keys', and 'modulation' in the old sense need not be expected; the essence is in the respecting of the intervals for what they are, and the hearing of their differences in new ways, generated by, and generating, a sense of the large-scale momentum that seems to me essential in symphonic work."[8].

Many aspects of this statement, if not related to the music itself, may seem rather vague but the statement is clarified by reference to the way in which Simpson's later symphonies are organised. For example, the basic intervals at the opening of Symphony No.9 form a recognisable progression from which all of the material is evolved. But, on the broader scale, the progression moves upwards by a fourth (see Ex.196) and this forms the basis not only of the first forty bars (which rises through twelve 'terraces' of interlocking fourths) but also of much of the first section of the symphony and beyond. This demonstrates in musical terms what

Simpson means by intervals generating a sense of large-scale momentum.

The first three symphonies demonstrate the use of tonality much more clearly because they reflect Simpson's absorption of Nielsen's 'progressive tonality' (although this had obviously developed naturally in Simpson's work before he encountered Nielsen's music - the first two-thirds of Symphony No.1 were written without knowledge of Nielsen's work). However, Simpson's attitude to 'progressive tonality' has been misunderstood in relation to Nielsen's use of the concept. Hugh Ottaway has clearly defined it, in Nielsen's terms, as

> "not a dogma or a magic formula. The term refers to the evolution of one tonality from another by a process of sustained key-conflict. (The italics are important because any muddle-headed dabbler can end in a key other than the one he has started in)!"

The misunderstanding occurs when one imagines that it is the idea of ending in a different key which is essential to progressive tonality. In fact it is the concept of 'sustained key-conflict' which really matters (for instance the Third Symphony of Nielsen is nonetheless 'progressive' in its use of tonality, even though the first movement does end in the same key as the end of the symphony). It will quickly be realised that the term 'progressive tonality' is somewhat misleading and perhaps 'dynamic tonality' would be a better

term because it emphasises the fluidity in the use of tonal centres as a means to create action without making any assumptions that the music must automatically end up in a different key to that in which it started. In this respect, discussion of Simpson's Second and Third Symphonies would benefit from this more accurate term. No.2 begins and ends in B and No.3 starts on a unison C and ends in C (although ambiguity persists even until three bars from the end). Within this framework the strong pull of another tonal region (in the case of No.2, two regions) creates the action which gives the work dynamism and the way in which this functions is closely analysed in the following chapters.

Naturally enough, the use of such a procedure inevitably results in passages where two tonalities are combined and one might assume that 'bi-tonality' would result (the opening bars of Symphony No.2 are a good example). However, it is misleading to think of Simpson's music in these terms because 'bi-tonality' implies the functioning of two tonalities as 'equals', which is quite alien to Simpson's (or, for that matter, Nielsen's) way of thinking. There is no question of two keys happily co-existing; ultimately one has to exert a stronger 'pull' than the other. In short, <u>conflict</u> is the dominating factor and one tonality must eventually prove stronger than the other.

It will be seen that concentration upon tonal argument dominates the discussion of the first three symphonies but is less apparent in the subsequent chapters. This reflects the nature of the works themselves. From Symphony No.4 onwards the emphasis tends to shift (most radically between the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies) and the Fourth Symphony, which is constructed on the tonal ground-plan of a Classical symphony, takes the key of each movement as a point of departure around which it circulates - one of the numerous ways in which No.4 stands rather to one side of the rest of the cycle. The dangers of being too specific about key in some of the later works is apparent from the fact that in his discussion of Symphony No.5, Paul Pellay suggests that the main tonal centre of the work is B^{b},9. whereas in a talk before a performance of the work in 1984 the composer said that if he had to say what key it was in he would probably choose A^{b}!

iv) **Line**

Virtually any passage selected at random from any of Simpson's works will reveal that he is, above all, a contrapuntist. His thought is linear and this is due, to some extent, to his own musical training. His main instrument was the trumpet on which he became quite highly skilled, but the instrument he has never come to terms with is the piano and

he admits that he is a bad pianist. Consequently, when composing, he tends to stay away from the piano because "everyone knows what would happen if I wrote only what my fingers would play"[10]. and he writes everything, even the largest orchestral pieces, straight into full score. Because he is not writing a short score and not working with the sound of the piano (which is, in its very nature, a harmonic instrument) the result tends to be linear.

As a student, Simpson worked to gain a strong contrapuntal technique studying privately with Herbert Howells. Simpson tells of how he once took Howells a fugue written on a subject of his own invention. Howells looked through and commented upon it and then started to write another fugue on the subject: "I watched while he wrote, about as quickly as you'd write a letter, a fugue of maybe a hundred bars on my subject, which he hadn't seen before that day... It was a lovely little fuguue and I felt crushed and encouraged at the same time."[11]. Such a training, together with a close study of Bach throughout his life has made Simpson into a contrapuntist of a mastery rare amongst contemporary composers.

His lines tend to be concentrated and compact, often built out of just one or two intervals. This, added to the fact that the intervals Simpson uses tend to be small ones (seconds and minor thirds predominate) lends his lines a

particular toughness and intensity - the opening melody of the second movement of Symphony No.3 is a highly characteristic example: **Ex.60**. The chromaticism of the lines is often the result of ambiguity between major and minor thirds and major and minor seconds, the clearest manifestation of this ambiguity being what Simpson describes as "my perverse habit of going up flat and coming down sharp".[12]. This can also be seen in *Symphony No.3* (Ex.60 second and third bars) but it also features very prominently in the Tenth Quartet (third movement) and the Eighth Symphony - though examples abound throughout his music. If this concentrated use of intervals displays a certain terseness and short-windedness this does not mean that he is incapable of writing a simple tune. Although not exactly legion in his music, they do exist - for instance at the end of Quartet No.1, in the slow section of Symphony No.1 and throughout the whole of Symphony No.4. In fact Simpson says, "When I write a tune I bloody well mean it!". The cello melody near the opening of Symphony No.4's slow movement is an extreme example and it is interesting to note that it has undergone two revisions, the first altering its shape and eliminating certain diatonic aspects and the second removing some of the notes and inserting rests. Also, the wide range of this melody reveals that, even at its most melodious, Simpson's style is fundamentally instrumental, as opposed to vocal, in concept.

Simpson's melodic fertility is best displayed in the memorability of many of his fugal and (in the case of Symphony No.5) canonic subjects where he usually creates a satisfying and easily recognisable overall shape which enables the listener to follow its progress very clearly (see Exx.111, 113, 211, 217). Even though they usually consist of quite small intervals, they tend to be spread across a fairly wide compass (the fugue in the finale of Symphony No.10 being an extreme example - Ex.228).

In recent years, as Simpson's interest in the generative power of intervals has increased, his own intervallic language has widened somewhat and in addition to seconds and thirds he is now interested in using fourths and fifths. Simpson himself has identified the Seventh Symphony as the starting point for this and said in an interview regarding the Eighth Symphony that "[I'm] using the resonances inherent in the simple intervals... approaching the interval of a fifth as if I had never heard it before, and trying to find out what can happen."[13]. Although the fifth is used as the basis of a number of recent works (Quartet No.8 and Symphony No.8 - particularly its later stages, as well as Symphony No.6) the fourth is found to be operating as a generative interval in Symphony No.4 whose opening consists of a series of fourths 'coiled up'. So the broadening of this aspect of his musical language can be seen as a gradual process which goes back well beyond the Seventh Symphony.

Although Simpson's contrapuntal style may appear elaborate and complex, in the majority of cases it is actually startlingly simple in its essentials, remaining mainly in three, sometimes in four and quite often only in two parts. These parts are then often doubled in unusual registers. (For example, the opening of Symphony No.8 is basically a four-part texture but appears to be much more complex due to the elaborate octave doublings: Ex.163.) Sometimes a line will suddenly branch out into a complex chordal agglomeration to add density to a hitherto fairly simple texture (see Symphony No.5: Ex.104 where a three-part texture is given greater density by the addition of complex chords). Simpson often uses a very simple two part texture in which the activity of the lines ensures that a sense of textural emaciation is avoided. The examples of this are quite numerous; two in particular are worth mentioning: Symphony No.6 bb.18-34, which is almost entirely in two parts, and Symphony No.9 bb.41-62 which occasionally branches out into four parts (b.48) but which remains a predominantly two-part texture.

At the other extreme, an extended example of composition in six real parts (plus doublings) occurs in the first canon of Symphony No.5 (bb.499-514). This textural complexity is the inevitable consequence of the procedure employed here - that of canonic entries on each degree of a sustained six-

note chord - but textural confusion is here avoided by the addition of many rests in each part.

As with all true contrapuntists the ideas of imitation and inversion are absolutely basic to Simpson's style. Both can be clearly seen at the beginning of Symphony No.4 (Ex.81) in which the lower voice freely imitates the upper at bb.6, 8, and 10, and inverts it in bb.6 and 12. This is clarified by the strong rhythmic outline given to both voices. Fugal writing arises naturally from imitative writing and the use of inversion frequently adds variety to fugal expositions (the fugue in the Ninth Quartet is an example). One of the most striking examples of inversion occurs in the second canon of Symphony No.5 in which every other entry of the subject is inverted. This is partially for practical reasons as the final appearance of the subject on high violins would be unplayable in its original form.

Simpson's contrapuntal resourcefulness is a mainstay of his symphonic method. Harmonic considerations are usually placed at the service of the counterpoint and, on the whole, harmony is the result of his attitude to line rather than the other way round.

v) **Harmony**

Simpson's harmony is often characterised as 'stark' and it is perhaps the clearest manifestation of a musical language which seeks to challenge rather than seduce.

For a composer so deeply concerned with contrapuntal writing it is inevitable that the harmonic language will be dictated by the number of lines operating at a given moment and Simpson's harmony can often be quite spare. In recent works, Simpson has tended to enrich the harmony by the simple procedure of doubling a chord at the fifth. Examples of this abound in the Ninth and Tenth Symphonies (Exx.210, 216, 219 and 221). The effect is compelling and original, yet it is based upon a simple premise - that of extending the principle of octave doubling to the next step of the harmonic series. The effect is therefore founded upon a harmonic phenomenon.

Although he is not afraid of grinding dissonances in his harmonic style (Ex.210 demonstrates this), Simpson's language also admits the most straightforward of diatonic chords. Symphony No.1 contains striking passages in which unrelated diatonic chords are pitted against one another to create a highly individual effect (Exx.6 and 9), whereas the major triad in first inversion with a bare fifth at the top is a sound of which he is very fond (Exx.61, 219). (This chord is

particularly Beethovenian in sound but ultimately stems from Baroque recitative.)

Another simple chord which Simpson utilises in an unusual way is the chord of the dominant 7th. This is partcularly apparent in Symphony No.3, where it is used at the final climax to discharge the entire tonal argument of the work. But it is also used elsewhere outside of its dominant context (e.g. Ex.51, seventh bar, where it is used to approach a first inversion chord of the type mentioned above, thus creating a V^7-VI#^{6}3 'interrupted' cadence). Two 'dominant' 7ths are superimposed in Symphony No.4 (Ex.85, b.7).

Different transpositions of the same chord are often superimposed to create a complex chord - for instance, the use of different transpositions of the diminished 7th in Symphony No.5 (Exx.104, 108). The latter example, employing all three possible transpositions, results in a widely spaced twelve-note chord.

Despite the fact that Simpson is certainly not the kind of composer to use 'cluster harmony' and that he is quite hostile towards twelve-note music, he has in many works used twelve-note chords and has organised tonality based on all twelve tones when this has arisen naturally out of the material. There are certain special cases where this happens.

The first one arises out of the superimposition of diminished 7ths and has been mentioned above, but there are two other important examples: the use of superimposed fourths and fifths. In fact, the use of twelve-note harmony is encountered as early as the Third Symphony (see Ex.53) and here the interval of the fifth is used in a fairly unstructured way. In Symphony No.4 the music moves towards the chordal use of all the pitches built out of superimposed fourths (Ex.85) but only uses nine of the notes (2nd bar, resolving onto a 6/3 chord of C major.) The 7th bar of Ex.85 alternates six-note chords of fourths (strings) with chords built out of combining two dominant 7ths.

It is in the later symphonies that full twelve-note chords built out of fourths and fifths are encountered. Twelve-note chords based on fifths occur in Symphony No.8 (Ex.166) and similar chords based on fourths appear in Symphony No.9 (Ex.206).

Such chords, though obviously complex, are always widely spaced so that there is never any sense of their being construed as simply a chromatic cluster; the integrity of the constituent intervals is always maintained. This is also true of the basic chordal material at the opening of Symphony No.7 which the composer says "if played crudely together would form an ugly dissonance of five adjacent semitones". Instead they are widely distributed to create three simultaneous but

clearly differentiated elements: a major third in the treble, a single tone in the centre and a major second in the bass (Ex.144).

vi) **Rhythm**

One of the most remarkable qualities in Simpson's music is its extraordinary driving energy. There are few twentieth century composers who have so consistently succeeded in writing really fast music. There are three main ways in which this is achieved. Firstly, the music frequently makes use of ostinato patterns - often of a very simple kind. For example, the final section of Symphony No.5 is dominated by alternations of on- and off-beats (see Ex.115), becoming what can only be described as an 'oom-pah' figuration (bb.1691-1734). Another favourite rhythmic device for spurring the music on is the continuous use of a triplet figuration first encountered in Symphony No.5 (Ex.116) but also appearing in Symphony No.6 (as 'x' in Ex.133) and Symphony No.8 (Ex.188). A more intricate ostinato pattern is the one which provides the sole rhythmic foundation of the Scherzino in Symphony No.5, consisting of five compound beats divided into 2+2+1 (Ex.112).

The second device used in the creation of extremely fast music arises from the first and it is continuity of movement.

That is to say, once a tempo is set it is rarely altered (if it is, then it carries an important structural purpose and is often achieved by metrical modulation outlined above - the finale of Symphony No.8 is a good example). Simpson's music is notable for its lack of accelerandi and ritardandi (the former do occasionally occur: Symphony No.2, mvt.1, Fig.16; Symphony No.3, mvt.2, Fig.56; Symphony No.6, b.296; Symphony No.10, mvt.1, b.433; the latter occur very rarely). This often results in extremely lengthy passages at a very high tempo: the scherzo of Symphony No.4 (if one discounts the metrical modulation for the trio section) continues at the same fast tempo for 1319 bars, whilst the final section of Symphony No.5 consists of 1179 bars in an absolutely continuous Molto Allegro pulse.

What differentiates Simpson from many other composers who use ostinati (for example, Stravinsky) is that within a continuous rhythmic pattern his music is constantly changing and evolving. The Scherzino of Symphony No.5 is a good example of how, over an unyielding ostinato rhythm, the harmonic and melodic presentation undergo continual change. This is quite different from the way in which Stravinsky uses ostinato - which is in an essentially static, 'non-symphonic' way. The difference has been clarified by Simpson himself: from Figs.7 to 13 in the **Symphony in Three Movements**: "...the bass jogs in an ostinato and the orchestra jogs with it; it

is pure ballet music, and when the composer has had enough of this sort of jogging, he switches to another (see Figs.13 to 21). These passages are not isolated examples, ripped from their context; they are entirely typical."[14].

This leads naturally to the third point about Simpson's fast music - the control of movement. This aspect impinges on the sections concerning form, tonality and harmony, because it is the successful integration of all of these elements which creates the sense of movement. In the example cited above concerning the use of ostinato in Symphony No.6 (Ex.133), mention was made of a rhythmic pattern marked 'x'. This pattern persists, almost without interruption, from b.1031 to the end of the work (b.1255) but its movement and direction are controlled by the harmonic background: from b.1085-1159 the slowly moving chords over the top of 'x' and the periodically changing continuous quavers in the bass create the sense of movement which 'x' enlivens.

Another example of the control of movement occurs in the Scherzo of Symphony No.9 where, over a continuous crotchet pulse, a series of forte attacks is introduced, each one a bar sooner than the last (bb.687-831). This built-in accelerando is combined with the gradual formation of a twelve-note chord, so the gradual increase in harmonic tension is mirrored by an increase in rhythmic activity.

Whereas Simpson's fast music is controlled by a clear understanding of the large-scale movement behind its often manic surface activity, the slower music is similarly never allowed to lapse into rhythmic torpor. This is frequently achieved by the use of strong accents and a high degree of rhythmic variety - the opening of the slow movement of Symphony No.8 is a fine example of music which, though very slow, is still rhythmically active (Ex.181). Elsewhere, Simpson is fond of introducing irregular rhythmic patterns - often on a single repeated note: Symphony No.4 (Ex.81 a^2), Symphony No.5 (Ex.113, final bar), Symphony No.6 (bb.42-43, 46-49). In fact, a high degree of rhythmic activity in the slow music is a notable feature of much of his work, frequently resulting in music which never appears to relax for a moment. It is mainly in recent years that Simpson has introduced long stretches of calmer music (from Quartet No.9 onwards) and this has so far been seen most clearly in the vast sweep of the Ninth Symphony.

vii) **Orchestration**

Simpson's use of the orchestra has, on a number of occasions, been criticised for "the pervasive subjection of colour to function"[15]. and it is partly true that his main concerns lie with form and content rather than with colour for its own sake - a fact which places him apart from many of

his contemporaries. In this respect he would probably agree with Edmund Rubbra that "...colour has fascination, but for me, it's no substitute for the real substance of art. You can't abstract the green from a leaf and still pretend the leaf exists."[16].

The matter of whether colour and content are separable is, naturally, a contentious issue and it would obviously be true to say of many composers (Debussy, for example) that these elements are absolutely impossible to dissociate. In the case of Simpson (and, for that matter, Rubbra) it is worth looking to their admiration for Bach for whom invention was of such primary importance that the question of instrumentation was frequently open-ended (for example, **The Art of Fugue**, which Simpson himself arranged for string quartet). On the other hand, it would be fatuous to assume that any of these composers is entirely uninterested in instrumental colour (the very fact that Simpson writes straight into full score testifies to the immediacy of his instrumental imagination). In this respect it would be worthwhile to qualify Rubbra's analogy by saying that "if the leaf is not green to begin with then it is probably dead."

It is all too easy to dismiss Simpson's orchestration as colourless and uninteresting simply because it does not conform to the traditional concept of 'beautiful sound'. On

closer acquaintance the writing for orchestra reveals itself not only to be masterly but colourful and highly individual.

The size of Simpson's orchestras varies considerably from the double-woodwind based combinations of Symphonies 2 and 7 (both of which omit heavy brass) to the extremely large orchestras of Symphonies 5 and 8.

The string section generally carries the main burden of material and Simpson's understanding of string technique has been learned from the practical experience of working closely with string players, not only in preparing performances of his own chamber music for strings, but also in the years as a B.B.C. producer where he was particularly involved in chamber music broadcasts.

Though demanding, the string writing is always practical and Simpson has, on occasion, shown himself willing to make amendments for practicality's sake. One example appears in the first canon of Symphony No.5 where, due to the difficulty of intonation, the composer has sanctioned the playing of the high first violin passage from bb.504-508 on a solo violin (this occurred in a performance by the Philharmonia Orchestra in 1984). In Symphony No.8 Simpson split a passage a2 for each section in the finale (bb.542-557, 602-623) when the conductor of the first performance complained that it was unplayable at that speed.[17].

Simpson assumes the double basses to have a bottom C string at several exposed moments in Symphony No.5 (e.g. bb.388-9) and a performance of this work by the Young Musicians' Symphony Orchestra in 1988 was somewhat undermined by the fact that none of the basses had a fifth string.

Solo passages for string instruments are almost entirely absent from the works, with one notable exception. This occurs in Symphony No.4 - the long cello melody at the opening of the slow movement. Divisi passages are, however, not uncommon: for example, in the scherzo of Symphony No.9 (bb.555-8) each section, with the exception of the basses, divides a3 and the resulting twelve divisions play a twelve-note chord built out of fourths.

The actual string technique in Simpson's work remains essentially Classical and, though pizzicati and tremolandi abound, more exotic effects such as 'col legno' and 'sul ponticello' are avoided.

The most novel feature of Simpson's woodwind writing is his tendency to have all three flute players doubling piccolo. This occurs in Symphonies 3, 4, 5 and 8 and it adds a particular brilliance to the top range of the orchestra. The piccolos frequently feature in unusual doublings and spacings: for example, in the scherzo of Symphony No.4 where two of them are combined with low clarinets, tuba and

spacings: for example, in the scherzo of Symphony No.4 where two of them are combined with low clarinets, tuba and contrabassoon in a succession of slow moving chords (bb.787-794).

Simpson's use of the middle register of the woodwind section has frequently resulted in a preference for using the mellower clarinet in A, rather than the B^b instrument, and also the introduction, in the latest three symphonies of the cor anglais. Apart from the Second and Seventh Symphonies, the bass register is always supported by the widespread use of the contrabassoon.

It is in his brass writing that Simpson has displayed his greatest orchestral adventurousness. As a brass player himself (brought up in the brass band tradition) it is unsurprising that he should show a great preference for using large combinations and for extending the outer limits of the section (which, after all can be done far more easily in a brass band due to the presence of the E^b soprano cornet and E^b and B^b basses).

Although he frequently takes the horn section to the top of their compass (e.g. Symphony No.5, b.1668-1669), Simpson always retains the standard size of the horn section, never increasing it beyond four (and, of course, only using two in Symphonies 2 and 7). However, with the trumpet section he is

more adventurous, frequently using four players (Symphonies 1, 4, 5 and 8) with two players using standard B^b instruments and two using the higher D trumpets to add brilliance to the top register. Thus he can easily take his section up to a concert top E^b (Symphony No.5, b.36). The otherwise classical orchestra of Symphony No.2 is greatly enhanced by the brilliant colouring provided by the two trumpets in D. Elsewhere, Simpson uses the standard B^b instrument - never the trumpet in C, as used by most contemporary composers.

The trombone section is increased from three to four in Symphonies 5 and 8 - employing two tenor trombones and two bass trombones. Whilst in the same works Simpson doubles the tuba. The result is often a very powerful brass section which the composer is frequently happy to use with unflinching aggression.

All of Simpson's symphonies contain extensive and satisfying timpani parts. In the Fifth, Eighth and Tenth Symphonies two sets are used (in the Fifth they are placed antiphonally as in Nielsen's Fourth Symphony). Simpson points out that he is careful not to insult the timpanist by thinking of him as another member of the percussion section and says that in, for example, Symphony No.9 the timpani's (highly virtuosic) part is just as important as anyone else's.

The use of percussion, though more sparing, is nonetheless highly effective. The most important instruments in his section are side-drum and cymbals (Symphonies 4, 5, 6 and 8) with the tam-tam making brief appearances in Nos.6 and 8, and the bass drum, uniquely, in No.8. Tuned percussion instruments are never employed, neither are unusual playing techniques. The sole exception to the last point is the use of suspended cymbal rolls played with metal sticks. These occur to telling effect in Symphonies 4, 6 and 8.

One instrument never encountered in Simpson's orchestra is the harp - its characteristics find no place in Simpson's hard-edged and often 'brassy' textures.

Mention was made (under the section dealing with influences) of the tendency to use extremely widely-spaced doublings. This often results in some rather bizarre instrumental combinations - like the extraordinary flute and tuba doubling in the second movement of Symphony No.3 (Fig.90). Often a number of polyphonic lines will be simultaneously doubled at several octaves' distance and Simpson is fond of taking the highest voice and doubling it in the bass or vice-versa. A typical example of this occurs in the first canon in Symphony No.5 (b.504) where the lowest voice (cellos and basses) is doubled three octaves above (flute 2, oboe 2, clarinet 1), while the highest voice (violin 1) is doubled three and four octaves below (clarinet

2 and bassoon 1). Meanwhile the viola line is doubled two octaves higher (flute 1), the second violins are doubled two octaves lower (bass clarinet) and the piccolo is doubled four octaves lower (bassoon 2). Thus an extremely complex network of doublings results which is entirely characteristic of the composer.

Chordal passages are often similarly widely spaced and mention was made in the section dealing with harmony of the recent tendency to double a chord at the fifth (separated by several octaves). The third bar of Symphony No.10 is an excellent example (Ex.219) with a two octave gap separating the trombone parts from the lowest note of the woodwind doubling at a fifth (see also Symphony No.9 Ex.216).

Simpson's orchestral style, like all the other aspects of his compositional technique, is achieved without 'showmanship' and remains carefully disciplined. The orchestration is not 'grafted on' to the music - he thinks in orchestral sound from the start of a piece - and like every other aspect of his art, it is wholly integrated with the other constituent elements. In all of Simpson's music, it is the sum total of these elements which really matters, but if one examines any single facet it does not take long to discover qualities of compelling originality, individualism and, beneath its uncompromising and rugged exterior, deep beauty.

Notes

1. Composer of our time: Robert Dearling.
   Records and Recording, 1979.
2. Letter to **The Listener**, 23.xi.67.
3. Simpson: **The Essence of Bruckner**.
4. Bayan Northcott: '1980, A Year of Simpson' -
   Tempo 135 (December 1980)
5. Letter to author.
6. Simpson (ed.): **The Symphony** Vol.II - Introduction.
7. ibid.
8. Tonic: Vol.2 No.2, p.19.
9. Tonic: Vol.3 No.1.
10. Tonic: Vol.2 No.1, p.9.
11. Tonic: Vol.2 No.1, p.6.
12. Letter to author.
13. Interview with Michael Oliver: Music Weekly, 6.xi.82;
    Tonic, Vol.2 No.1.
14. Simpson (ed.): **The Symphony** Vol.II - Introduction.
15. Bayan Northcott: '1980, A Year of Simpson' -
    Tempo 135 (December 1980)
16. Murray Schafer: **British Composers in Interview** (p.70).
17. At a subsequent recording by the B.B.C. Philharmonic, the orchestra sight-read the passage without recourse to the alteration!

SYMPHONY NO.1 (1951)

One of the most striking features of Symphony No.1 is its highly original structure. This is particularly interesting when one considers the extent to which Simpson has been concerned throughout his life with music of the Classical period. Bearing this in mind, it would be reasonable to assume that the First Symphony might be an unproblematic neo-classical work in common with many of the symphonies being written during the 40's and early 50's.

Instead, the First turns out to be a single movement work lasting some twenty-five minutes which is built on a tripartite structure comprising an opening Allegro, a slow movement and a quick finale. It is not separate movements joined together; the material is highly integrated throughout to create a true one-movement symphony. Of course there are earlier examples of this approach: Sibelius' 7th is the most familiar and masterly example but Barber's 1st can also be cited. However, what makes Simpson's work quite original is the way in which the tempo of each section relates directly to one basic pulse. The clearest example concerns the relationship of the central section to the 'finale'. The tempo of the former is ♩ = 76 and the latter is marked ' ♩ ♩ ♩ =  del precedente' - that is to say, one crotchet beat of the previous tempo equals a whole bar at the new tempo. This tendency to build a large-scale structure out of several speeds derived from a single basic tempo is highly

characteristic of Simpson's style and is to be found in many of his Symphonies and Quartets. The device, variously known as metric modulation/metrical modulation/tempo modulation, is to be found in the work of many contemporary composers - often in a far more complex way (e.g. the music of Elliott Carter). In Simpson's case, the reason for using such a procedure is to reinforce the unity of the work and must always be considered in relation to the unity also displayed in matters of thematic material and tonal argument. Otherwise it simply becomes a sterile academic exercise - a situation wholly alien to Simpson's creative personality.

Another impressive quality of this symphony is the way in which a dynamic approach to large-scale tonal argument (so characteristic of Simpson's music) is already employed in a highly developed way. Viewed on the broadest scale, the work begins by trying to establish A as a tonal centre, swings to E-flat for the slow section (tonally as far away from A as possible) and gradually reasserts A during the final section. This process has been made clear in an admirably concise and lucid analysis made by Deryck Cooke for the 1957 issue of the work on record.[1].

The symphony's turbulent opening presents various tonalities in rapid succession. The sustained minor 3rd loudly asserted by two D trumpets (a characteristic feature of the Simpson orchestra, also appearing in Nos. 2, 4, 5 and 8)

suggests D minor or (as is confirmed by the flute, piccolo and strings) B^b major. This is immediately contradicted by a B natural, dragging the tonality up a semitone, which in turn gravitates to F - a leap of a tritone - foreshadowing the symphony's large-scale tonal concerns which have already been mentioned: **Ex.1.**

Until bar 4 the substance of the music is a series of sustained notes, each suggesting itself as a tonal area simply by virtue of insistence. In bars 4 and 5 the first real activity begins to take place - initially in even crotchets in the bass (a figure involving two steps and an upward leap; marked x) and then more rapid semiquaver movement which attempts to establish the key of A minor. However the insistence of the note B causes bar 6 to act as a dominant of E (bar 7). It is therefore apparent that this opening is extremely rich in incident - a great deal happens that is characteristic of the work as a whole. Particularly noteworthy is the tendency to progress to the furthest tonal extreme (i.e. an augmented 4th from the tonic) and also the way in which any attempt to achieve tonal stability is immediately contradicted.

The tempestuous mood continues for thirteen bars at which point the shrill sonority of the two D trumpets reappears: **Ex.2.**

This passage, which tonally moves once again through a tritone, is important because here fig.x (which occured in bb.4-5 of Ex.1) reaches its definitive state, namely a descending/ascending major 2nd followed by an ascending perfect 5th and perfect 4th, from which future development of the figure takes its starting point. After a further eight bars of fortissimo - the last five scored for full orchestra (bb.17-24) - A minor is established in a powerful descending passage: **Ex.3.** This is clearly derived from the bass-line in bb.3 and 4, which itself resulted in fig.x, and it is important not only because it firmly establishes the tonality for the first time but because it will recur later as a kind of landmark in the tonal landscape. Also it introduces a descending scalic figure, 'y', which immediately forms the basis of a melody heard at the soft opening of the next musical paragraph: **Ex.4.**

The sense of contrast created by the widely differentiated dynamics and texture of these two 'paragraphs' makes it tempting to view them as sonata form first and second subjects. This interpretation would be misleading as not only does the music defy conventional sonata form pigeonholing but the apparent second subject also interacts freely with elements of the first. These elements are initially heard as 'disturbances' on the woodwind against imitative treatment of Ex.4 in the strings (e.g. b.39/c.f. b.23), then (when the strings have moved tonally from A to E^b - another tritone) the interaction

is between 'x' on the trombone and material from Ex.4 in the strings: **Ex.5.**

The whole of this passage has an eerie disembodied quality resulting from the extremely low dynamic level and the contrast in texture with the previous passage. It is interrupted at b.53 by the fiercest outburst so far. This begins by reiterating the triplet gruppetti heard at the symphony's opening and proceeds to expand upon the version of 'x' quoted in Ex.1. Against this the violins and violas play scalic passages which try, unsuccessfully, to insist on A as the tonal centre and, above them, chords are 'hocketted' between high woodwind and horns: **Ex.6.** These chords are simply diatonic triads and from the score look unremarkable. In reality, however, they provide a good example of one of the most characteristic (and disconcerting) aspects of Simpson's style: his ability to take simple, potentially banal, ideas and put them into a context which makes them sound utterly original and new. This is, of course, a tribute to the strengths of his creative mind, because the truly creative artist is never bored by what may superficially seem like routine ideas - his creativity will always breathe new and vigorous life into them and discover their exciting potential. This simple idea is used to great climactic effect, dragging the tonality downwards to a G which is sustained on the brass and timpani while strings and then woodwind play a furious descending scale in sextuplets (bb.70-72).

As with the previous fortissimo passage, the music is eventually sharply contrasted with extremely soft and delicate writing, the preceding tutti passage having been cut off abruptly on the brink of F#, a solo flute enters centred around that key and accompanied by soft tremolandi on violins and violas: **Ex.7.**

Again, the atmosphere of the passage is somewhat etherial, but this is not a straightforward restatement. Instead, the material is in a constant state of transformation and the dotted rhythms of Ex.4 are changed into tiny scurrying groups of demisemiquavers. Tonally, the music could be said to inhabit a kind of 'No-man's-land' moving from F# to C# and to G.

So far the music has been constructed from blocks of contrasting material; no attempt is made at conventional transition between them. The use of this device inevitably suggests the influence of Bruckner - a composer for whom Simpson has a great admiration. It is clear that these blocks are mutually exclusive in character - though they are, thematically, subtly related (see Exs.3 and 4). The loud music constantly strives to achieve a tonal centre of A and the soft music fails to establish itself in any particular key. In the next musical paragraph the first group returns in the most sustained and violent conflict heard so far. It is based on a further transformation of 'x': **Ex.8**, and is constructed in rising terraces of keys - B, C and D over some twenty-four

bars. This culminates in a vehement transformation of the woodwind and horn chords of Ex.6 - this time played by the full orchestra: **Ex.9.**

In the second bar of this example, the rhythms of the opposing streams of chords are interchanged, creating a rhythmic conflict which adds to the volatile nature of the music. As the trombones crown the passage with a a triumphant assertion of 'x', the music, having returned to B major, again suddenly calms - and a new element is introduced: instead of total contrast, the violins and cellos softly continue the complementary rhythms of Ex.9 (this time in tonal agreement) and, as the sequential pattern shifts to F# major, the solo oboe plays an inversion of 'y': **Ex.10.** 'y' never reached a definitive state in either A or F# but now, inverted, and in a key half way between the A-E^b polarity, it becomes flowing and productive (b.136 et.al.).

Were it not for the fact that the material is in a constant state of development and transformation, this passage might be seen as the beginning of a sonata-form recapitulation, with 1st and 2nd subjects reversed because, at length, Ex.1 returns, both reinforced and a tritone away from the original statement. This has, of course, been prepared by the fact that the preceding material has centred on the sharp side of A. This recapitulation concentrates the material of the opening and, where Ex.2 began, treats fig.x as the basis of a fugato in B^b

beginning in the bass. This functions as a powerful dominant and makes the eventual return of Ex.3, this time in E^b, overwhelmingly inevitable. So the first section of the work has swung from A to E^b in a wholly convincing and compelling manner.

The tempo remains unchanged[2.], but the note values greatly increase and there no doubt that a new, slow phase has begun. This makes a simple but profound point - namely, that the speed at which music moves is not dependent on the metronome marking, but on the rate of harmonic tension and release - a fact basic to the understanding of Simpson's music. In this case the slow rate of harmonic movement gives rise to an eloquent stream of three-part counterpoint: **Ex.11.**

The productive seed of Ex.10 gives rise to a fine paragraph whose grave beauty (as impressive as anything in Simpson's subsequent output) and long, arching lines are once again reminiscent of Bruckner - this time of the soaring cathedral-like structures to be found in the adagios of the later symphonies. Ex.11 shows that the violin theme is based on a combination of Ex.10, greatly slowed down, and a free retrograde of 'x'.

The theme is repeated six times and is altered on each hearing (including lengthening and shortening). Twice it is given to the 1st violins, twice to the cellos. The entry of the

cellos and the resulting quartet texture inevitably make one think (with the benefit of hindsight) that it is here that Simpson's great series of string quartets - twelve to date - may have found its origin. Tonally, this calm music remains centred on E^b major. Again, the tension between the A-E^b polarity is underlined - A is a region of activity, E^b is one of calm reflection.

The fifth statement of the theme (b.246), still in E^b, is given to the 1st horn, with the 3rd horn in counterpoint, but now a feeling of suppressed energy enters the music. Firstly, the cellos and basses repeat the note G in quaver triplets and are then joined by a fragment of melody, marked pp and leggiero, on the 1st violins which is answered in imitation by the 2nd violins: **Ex.12.**

This tiny idea has considerable disruptive potential. Firstly, it has a strong pull towards A and, secondly, it is far from incidental in thematic terms - being a clear derivation of 'x'. It instigates a brief dialogue between flute and bassoon (bb.255-258), based on expanding intervals, with the flute insisting on C as a tonal centre (half way between A and E^b) and the bassoon on A: **Ex.13.**

The incident is extremely brief, but it prepares a new tonal region and, for the sixth and last statement of Ex.11, the oboe remains in C major, at a half way point between the

two opposing tonalities, rather than return to the initial E^b. The passage spreads through the woodwind and horns and eventually dies away, leaving just the first three notes of Ex.11 being passed from clarinet (in D^b) to oboe (in A), to flute (in F) and to piccolo (in D^b again) - that is to say, in descending steps of major thirds. The sustained D^b of the piccolo acts enharmonically as C# (i.e. the major third of A) and Ex.12 has no difficulty in asserting itself in A: **Ex.14.**

Here the already mentioned tempo change occurs and the finale bursts in (the pulsing triplets on the cellos having earlier prepared the ear for the new tempo). It is also at this point that there occurs what Hugh Ottaway, writing in 1970, presumably considered one of the work's "stylistic inconsistencies". Simpson was at about this stage in the work's composition when he discovered the music of Nielsen. The work was the 'Sinfonia Espansiva' and the impact was so great that it stopped Simpson composing for about six months because, as Simpson puts it, he discovered that Nielsen had already done what he himself was trying to do. Indeed, it is one of those extraordinary coincidences that Nielsen's work should concentrate so much on the tensions generated by the opposing tonalities of A and E^b: the same tonalities as Simpson's symphony (though, naturally, he wouldn't have realised this upon commencing the work).

The finale, in a vigorous one-in-a-bar 3/4 metre is indeed reminiscent of the Nielsen first movement. But one should perhaps avoid making too much of this particular similarity. From this point onwards, the integrity of the work in no way lapses - as will be demonstrated. Furthermore, the similarities already apparent in the musical procedures of the two composers simply underline how strong the relationship between them happens to be. The six month hiatus in this symphony's composition was probably due to the shock of recognition more than anything else. It is worth considering, for a moment, what happens at the opening of the 'Espansiva'. The ultimate goal of that symphony is also A major and, at the opening, repeated octave A's are hammered out, ff, by full orchestra. Simpson has often pointed out that if one sustains a single note for long enough, it will begin to sound like a dominant - in the case of the Nielsen symphony it resolves onto a D minor tune. In other words, the impetuous attempt to establish A fails and falls a 5th to D. This is symphonic momentum in action - the opening of Simpson's 'finale' presents a profound analogy with that work.

Here, A major also bursts in impetuously (Ex.14) and immediately sparks off a repeat of the tonal disagreement of Ex.13, though this time on violins 1 and 2, in the same octave and with the A and G crotchets reversed. This immediately results in an attempted transformation to the new tempo and tonality of 'y': **Ex.15.**

All of this happens quickly - in the space of just over a dozen bars and instigates a ferocious passage of running violin quavers - which begin to drift dangerously close to the region of E^b. The result is a return on the brass of Ex.11 at the original tempo and in E^b against which all the strings can do is to petulantly repeat octave Gs - a tone below the A they tried to establish: **Ex.16.**

The string octaves fade out to leave the brass playing what is essentially a seventh statement of the theme from the slow section, so that even though it is clear from the score where the finale begins, aurally it is not so straightforward. This demonstrates one of the ways in which this sort of tempo relationship helps to create a strong sense of structural unity. In fact, this passage is a metamorphosis of an earlier sketch entitled 'Cathedral Music'[3]. - a sketch obviously thoroughly assimilated into the music from the start.

The brass statement continues its stately progress, unperturbed by the attempts of the orchesta to assert Ex.14 in A. The strings again present Ex.16, this time on the note A (b.393) and this results in a massive V-I cadence in D major on the brass, reinforced by Ex.16 on the timpani. Here, the link with the Nielsen No.3 becomes apparent - the impetuous A being forced to function as the dominant of D.

Having made the point with considerable force, the brass make a diminuendo at the end of which A major succeeds in tentatively establishing itself. In fact, what has happened is that, since their D major cadence the brass have moved to the brink of E major, but their V-I cadence in that key is interrupted to create, in effect, an uneasy II-I cadence in A major: **Ex.17.** From b.439 a long and intensive development of Exs.14 and 15 begins. An important subsidiary role is played by a scalic pattern of repeated notes which appeared in Ex.13, but which occured as early as bar 20 of the work, and whose provenance is clearly to be found in the fifth bar (see Ex.1) where the strings asserted A minor: **Ex.18.** This development which gradually increases in freedom and energy, begins quietly in A and drifts towards B^b where a repeated harmonic sequence appears on flutes and bassoons: **Ex.19.** This sequence of chords is to recur several times, as is a sequential passage based on Ex.13 (bb.544-599), whose driving energy and use of rising and falling 'terraces' of keys looks forward to the first movement of Symphony No.2: **Ex.20.** This sequence, occuring first in counterpoint with Ex.19, rises through the keys B, C, D, E, F# then falls through F, E^b and D^b.

The next stage of the development begins on the wind and is concerned with the same material. However, this time, the tonality shifts back towards E^b which provokes, from the violins, the triplet 'gruppetto' and semitone clash from the very opening of the symphony - though now in E^b. It does not

have immediate musical consequences as the gruppetto immediately instigates a melody centred around A which is based on a combination of Ex.20 and 'x': **Ex.21.**

The A tonality loses its grip, dropping a minor third to G^b - one of the keys half-way between A and E^b. The atmosphere is more volatile and the ferocious string quavers from the finale's opening reappear ff, this time in counterpoint with the bass of Ex.20 (bb.659-665). This drop in tonality clarifies the significance of the earlier violin quote of the opening triplet 'gruppetto', for the Symphony's aggressive opening bars now appear in the original B^b (with harmonic reinforcement) on the brass (b.666). As if in reaction to this, the strings and woodwind play a more urgent version of Ex.20, this time moving upwards through the keys of D, E^b, E and F (bb.677-706). The arrival at F simply functions as a dominant of B^b and the brass return with their original fortissimo outburst (b.710).

The reappearance of the B^b major opening provokes yet another sequential appearance of Ex.20 - this time rising chromatically to G and finally dying away to leave Ex.18 and 19 in an untroubled A major. However, the A major tonality is soon undermined and the texture is invaded by a hemiola cross rhythm on trumpets and horns - its semitonal conflict reflecting that of the symphony's opening as well as the clash in the accompanying counterpoint: **Ex.22.** A major attempts to re-establish itself in a grinding Vc-I cadence repeated several

times: **Ex.23.** Each time this happens the strings plunge back into their rushing quavers, moving through a series of keys so that Ex.23 is heard successively in A major, C major, D major, F major, G major - in other words, keys alternately a minor third and a tone above each other. The next one in line is, of course, B^b and it duly arrives (at b.865) bringing with it the now inevitable reappearance of the symphony's opening. The significance of the cross-rhythms of Ex.22 now becomes clear: these quavers are at the same speed as the semiquavers of Ex.1. The result is an impressive combination of the two tempi.

This passage drives the music to E^b, at which point a strenuous fugal 'exorcism' of the tonal conflicts begins. It is a large-scale fugue and is audibly built on 'x'. It begins on the bass trombone, in D, and successive entries move upwards through the circle of fifths, i.e. A, E, B, F#, C#; then B^b, F, C. A final entry in A^b on bassoons, contrabassoon, bass trombone and tuba manages to wrench the tonality up a semitone to finally establish for once and for all the key of A major. Against furious string quavers the majestic descent of Ex.3 puts in an appearance on full brass and the work ends jubilantly (though still concentratedly and without any sense of bombast) with the triplet 'gruppetto' of Ex.1 finally clinching the A major cadence.

With any composer who has written a large number of symphonies, it is easy to overlook No.1 as an 'immature'

attempt (even Beethoven has suffered from this). In Simpson's case it would be a grave mistake to underrate the work. Simpson himself stands by the work - "I think it faithfully represents the best of me at the time"[4]. - and the work's close tonal argument certainly demonstrates his full and highly individual command of his compositional technique. The First Symphony is also notable for its absolute sense of musical confidence which makes it a compelling experience and also a work of fundamental importance to the understanding of his later achievements.

Notes

1. L.P.O. cond. Boult (HMV Records, HQM 1010)
2. Here Deryck Cooke's note is erroneous. There are not, as he states, two changes of tempo - just the one between sections 2 and 3.
3. Harold Truscott - 'The Origin of the 1st Symphony', Tonic, Vol.1 No.2, pp.11-16
4. Letter to author.

SYMPHONY NO.2 (1955-6)

Attention was drawn at the beginning of the previous chapter to the fact that Symphony No.1 is structurally quite unusual and does not reflect 'Classical'[1] models. The close integration of form and tonal argument was also stressed. In fact, it is this aspect of the music which is most 'Classical', for Simpson's mastery of this element is a direct result of his lifelong study of the music of Haydn and Beethoven. These influences are absorbed at the deepest level and have nothing whatsoever to do with 'grafting on' surface similarities to Classical models. There is nothing 'Neo' about Simpson's brand of Classicism - to his expansive and vigorous creative temperament the music of the age of Beethoven and Haydn is as new and alive now as it was when it was written. It is most important to understand this fact when considering Simpson's music because, as a result, one can see how his imagination has been unfettered and slavish imitation cast aside in favour of something new. This is how Simpson thinks and the confidence displayed in this aspect of his work results from the fact that it always knows where it is going because it knows where it came from.

It will therefore be no surprise to learn that, when faced with the challenge of writing a symphony for an early Beethoven-sized orchestra, he should once again find new and highly individual solutions to the problems of large-scale

musical organisation. The Second Symphony is scored for double woodwind, two horns, two trumpets in D, timpani and strings. The trumpets in D add an extra brilliance to the orchestral sound and their role (as well as that of the horns) is obviously more prominent than in a Beethoven symphony as they are not restricted to just natural harmonics. Similarly the timpani are chromatic (i.e. pedal timpani) and have quite a lot of retuning to do.

The work is in three movements and shares one major feature with the First Symphony - namely, the tendency to integrate the structure with large-scale tonal processes.

Simpson describes the work as being "in the key of B major/minor, with G and E^b playing crucial intermediate roles." The first movement begins in B, moves to E^b, returns to B, moves to G and returns again to B. Whereas Symphony No.1 dealt with two main tonal centres, here there are really three - each a major third away - so each key can function similarly as a 'pivot' between the other two.

Whereas the one-movement First Symphony traced a kind of 'journey' from A to E^b and back again, the three-movement Second is more like a series of 'excursions' from one tonal region to the other. This is particularly apparent in the second movement, a theme with thirteen variations, each moving between E^b and G.

The opening Allegro Grazioso begins softly with muted violins presenting the movement's basic material: **Ex.24.** The two-part figure marked 'a' is crucially important and should be thought of as consisting of two real parts rather than as 'tune and accompaniment'. Three intervals strike the ear in the first bar: minor second, major third and minor third. These are presented harmonically as opposed to melodically. Figure 'b' will be seen to grow naturally out of these intervals and it manifests itself as an arpeggiated major triad culminating in a flattened 7th and a downward semitone figure, marked 'x' - which proves to have enormous generative power in its own right. Tonally, the music is unstable, leaving the key of B as early as bar 3 to move towards A major.

The music flows gently along for forty bars, not establishing any particular key, until fig.3 when the violins accent an open-string G - a new and dramatic element taken up in the following bar by the entry of the timpani (repeated low G's) and woodwind (imitative entries of 'x'). The tonality is already moving downward towards G. Against rushing string semiquavers, unison woodwind try to reassert the key of B, in an expanded version of Ex.24b: **Ex.25.** With the entry of the two trumpets who persist with sustained octave D#'s (i.e. E^{b}), the woodwind become 'stuck' on a figure derived from the last bar of Ex.25 and give the impression of trying to petulantly insist of the key of B. The trumpet D#'s are constantly dragged down the B major scale - D#, C#, B - but each time return to their

initial D# rather than the B; the woodwind insist on their own figuration, repeating it nine times, like someone who hopes to win a lost argument by out-talking the other person. Meanwhile the strings continue their energetic quaver movement unaffected by the conflict which rages between trumpets and woodwind. Inevitably, this eventually results in a fierce outburst and a powerful climax: **Ex.26**, from which the full orchestra subsides to leave the trumpets holding grimly onto a major third of B and D# (E^b) with a fff timpani roll confirming the note B (Fig.6 bb.11-18).

As if in protest, the first violins play a fierce and passionate melody - this time in G: **Ex.27**. Examination of this melody quickly reveals that it derives its basic intervals from Ex.24a: it will be better heard that its third, fourth and sixth bars are derived from 'x' and that the fifth bar is from the upper voice of Ex.24a. It is important to remember that the music is growing organically and that implies constant change and development of the basic material - not merely repetition. This is what makes Simpson's music so hard to describe verbally, and rightly so - one cannot neatly categorise his musical ideas and expect them to remain in the same state. This distinguishes him from the kind of composer whose music may be described as 'gestural'. The clearest example of the latter is perhaps Stravinsky and comparison of the two composers is not intended here in a perjorative sense. Stravinsky's musical concerns are quite different to those of a composer like

Simpson and those differences are pointed out in Simpson's introduction to Volume 2 of the Pelican book 'The Symphony', edited by him.

Ex.27 is treated as a four-part fugal exposition for strings with entries at, successively, the fifth below, so that it moves through G, C, F and B^b. But, after the fourth entry of the subject, what promises to be an extended contrapuntal passage comes to a halt at the third bar of fig.8 on a grinding major seventh, capped by another (ff) sustained major third, this time on flutes and horns, and a tritone away from the trumpets' major third which initiated the fugato. 1st violins and violas attempt to reassert Ex.27 in the keys of E^b and B, but the attempt peters out - clearly, if anything productive is to come of Ex.27, another approach is necessary.

From the sixth bar of fig.9, the 1st violins softly reintroduce Ex.26, this time beginning on D - i.e. the dominant of the key they first tried - and this has the desired effect, instigating a fine athletic passage which, with its repeated quaver accompaniment, brings to mind the opening of the 'Eroica'. This is soon joined by Ex.24b on woodwind (still softly), Ex.24a, curiously scored for low bassoons, and the cellos taking over (in E^b) the violins' new, extended version of Ex.26. Tonally, this passage is nomadic, but a crescendo urges the music, momentarily, into B minor at fig.13 (reinforced by timpani) and a fortissimo version of Ex.24a. An

angry exchange ensues between Ex.24a and a figure derived from the triplets in the fourth bar of fig.7, the material wrenching itself from one key to another. At length, Ex.24a erupts in B minor with fortissimo timpani hammering out repeated quaver B's (two bars before fig.16). The violins immediately attempt to drag the tonality upwards to C with a statement of Ex.24b, trumpets add their version in G# and woodwind theirs in E (i.e. descending major thirds - see the tonal scheme already mentioned). Figure 'x' is now reintroduced and an extraordinary fifty-four-bar passage follows. Violins and woodwind obsessively repeat 'x' in imitation gradually rising and falling in tonal centre: **Ex.28.** Beneath this, lower strings, oboes and trumpets reinforce the harmony, while the timpani play repeated octave E^b's - the constant fortissimo dynamic adding to the sense of relentlessness. A passage of obsessive repetition has already appeared in this movement and this is indeed a characteristic of this symphony. Though such passages are not infrequent in some of Simpson's later symphonies, No.2 contains the most extreme examples. Throughout the passage, a 'poco a poco accelerando' drives the music forward until it explodes in a shattering climax marked fff and 'Molto Vivace, furioso' with the timpani and basses, still on an E^b pedal, repeating a new rhythmic pattern: **Ex.29.** Above this, the rest of the orchestra repeats the fierce climax of Ex.26 (c.f. fig.6/fig.20), this time beginning on G, a major third higher than previously. The climax eventually subsides leaving the trumpets holding a pp bare fifth in E^b to conclude

the first half of the movement, which, tonally, has swung from B to E^b.

With the timpani still softly repeating Ex.29, the trumpets' E^b fifth is challenged by a bottom B natural on both bassoons and a low G on cellos and basses - in other words, all three main tonal centres try to assert themselves. None of them has yet succeeded in gaining supremacy and the whole process begins again with violins softly playing Ex.24a in the original key as though nothing had happened. After five bars violas and cellos join them in imitation and, anticipated by the trumpets, the woodwind introduce a new idea which is both a derivative of Ex.29 and a free inversion of the lower part of Ex.24a immediately followed by the original version: **Ex.30.** The strings are, by now, (tenth and eleventh bar of fig.22) playing a sequential figure in two-part canon at one bar's distance - violins against violas and cellos - and this soon becomes a unison line, descending in four-bar sequences. Against this, woodwind and horns try Ex.30 in various keys before joining the strings (now with double-basses) now firmly in G minor (only the notes G, A and B^b are used). Four stark chords on the woodwind, each of one bar's duration, land on an E^b major chord in first inversion against which the trumpets play, in the original B minor, Ex.24a, but with a new lower part: **Ex.31.** This lower part is immediately taken as the basis of a wild clarinet solo in G^b: **Ex.31** - an idea which is then imitated by the flutes. But the ear is drawn to the continuation of the

clarinet line which now involves Ex.27, so one may not immediately realise that this is, in fact, a fugato with Ex.27 (the subject for the corresponding fugato in the movement's first half) now acting as a countersubject. The four entries of Ex.32 are progressively a semitone higher (though displaced by octaves) and, with the entry of the fourth voice (bassoons with pizzicato cellos and basses), the third voice has the Ex.27 countersubject whilst the first voice plays Ex.24b in A major - a striking display of invertible counterpoint (fig.27). Moreover, this idea reconciles, at one masterly stroke, the concepts of organic growth and of sonata form recapitulation.

It will be remembered that the first fugue was a reaction against the B/E^b conflict where the woodwind became 'stuck' in the key of B and the trumpets insisted on D# (E^b). The second fugue this time provokes a repeat of the conflict, though now a major third lower with woodwind in G and trumpets in B (it is now becoming clear that the three tonalities are 'pivoting' between each other). This time, however, the argument is briefer and there is a new element: the strings enter with a fierce canonic figure (again sequential) and move with the wind instruments towards a convulsive crescendo in B (Fig.30). The strings, in octaves, play Ex.27 fortissimo and timpani hammer out repeated G's. This provokes Ex.26 from fortissimo trumpets, over a low G roll on timpani whilst strings attempt Ex.30 and woodwind insist on Ex.24a, preparing the movement's second great climax. Beginning on G, woodwind and strings play Ex.26

in contrary motion (woodwind descending), whilst brass and timpani try to hold tonal stability in G minor - brass playing the upper voice of Ex.24a and timpani playing the rhythm of Ex.29 on repeated G's. At length woodwind too join in the Ex.29 rhythm and this results in a massive single bar of Ex.29 in G major, a bar's silence and a fortissimo outburst of Ex.24a in B touching on E^b. This is repeated and, in the most intense climax of the whole movement, octave G's are repeated by the whole orchestra to the rhythm of Ex.29, before trumpets and timpani direct the tonality towards E^b minor and a rapid diminuendo.

The final two pages are slower: two thirds of the original speed - the hemiola rhythm of Ex.29 proved so powerful that it turned the 3/4 into a compound duple time. The violins gently state Ex.24, now firmly in B major, woodwind quietly attempt to insist on an E^b major triad. The violins return to Ex.24a, repeating the first bar hypnotically, hardly disturbed by the V-I G major cadence from two flutes and a bassoon which regretfully slips into G minor. Finally, Ex.24a disappears into the distance repeated as many times as the conductor wishes, 'al niente', in what the composer describes as an "active pause".[2.]

It has already been noted that Simpson describes the keys of G and E^b as "intermediary" to the basic B major/minor tonality ot the Symphony. In the second movement, marked Largo

Cantabile, this concept is reversed: E^b and G are the main keys for a set of thirteen variations - B plays an intermediary role.

The theme is stated by the unaccompanied violas - enriched in the final bar by 2nd violins and cellos: **Ex.33.** It will easily be noticed that the tonality of the theme pivots between E^b and G and each variation does the same, until the middle of Variation VII (a G major chord). After that everything moves into reverse, because the movement is palindromic - the entire movement is the same forwards and backwards.

The most famous of musical palindromes is perhaps the 'Minuetto al Roverso' from Haydn's Symphony No.47 in G (which reappears in the Piano Sonata in A, Hob.26). Simpson is interested in palindromes and two of his works, the Haydn Variations for piano (1947) and the Quartet No.9 (1982) are sets of palindromic variations on Haydn's theme. He also uses them in the Ninth Symphony and jokingly claims that they save time when composing: "You just write the first half and copy it out backwards...". Sadly, it is a rather more complex process than that and Lionel Pike has pointed out that if one plays, for example, the theme from the slow movement of Haydn's 'Emperor Quartet' backwards it sounds like a bad Victorian hymn-tune.[3].

The theme itself moves through two octaves and falls back a major third to end on B (now acting as the third of G major) and it will be seen that the dominating interval is that of the minor third - especially in the rocking quaver figuration (Ex.33a) of bars 4 and 6. Two important points should be noted concerning this: (1) it comes from the very first bar of the first movement - the upper part of Ex.24a; (2) because the interval is reiterated, the ear will always grasp its character when it is played backwards.

Variation I transfers the melody to 1st violins and places it in a harmonic context with violin II, violas and cellos providing the other three parts.

Variation II takes the fragments of the theme and uses them as the basis for imitation between oboe 1 and horn 1 (using mainly bars 3 and 4, and also presenting Ex.33a backwards), joined by trumpets for the last three bars. This is supported by two-part writing for high violins - joined in the final bar by violas and celli.

Variation III begins on woodwind - the head of the theme in octaves on 1st clarinet and 1st bassoon. A rapid crescendo introduces an important idea in semiquavers - clearly derived from the treatment of Ex.33a in the preceding variation as something which can be played forwards or backwards: **Ex.34.**

This figure is of course a tiny palindrome, so it will sound the same on the 'return journey' - Variation XI.

Development of this figure, in its semitonal version, follows in Variation IV with violins and violas heard in three-part imitation over the theme in its original version, now scored for lower strings and bassoons. This provokes another crescendo and Variation V is a sustained fortissimo.

This variation is also the longest and is based upon the two versions of Ex.33a and its diminution in Ex.34. These move menacingly through horns and trumpets with timpani reinforcing Ex.34, before receeding into the enigmatic Variation VI.

Here, against a background of soft, slowly shifting chords, wind instruments pick out individual notes, repeating them in the four semiquaver pattern of Ex.34. The atmosphere is hushed and tense and it moves seemlessly into Variation VII - the central one - in which the palindrome turns: **Ex.35.**

Variation VII is made up of two elements, the continuation of the sustained string chords from Variation VI and a quiet, dignified melody of 1st flute and 1st horn. Tonally, this variation is, quite obviously unable to pivot between E^b and G due to its palindromic nature. The first string chord is of just B^b and G - the fundamental E^b is missing - and, at the centre of the variation, the chord is of G major in first

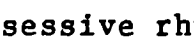
inversion. The melody runs contrary to this, beginning around F major and moving to E^b major at the central point, so that, at the heart of the palindrome, the E^b/G conflict is unresolved.

Now the 'return journey' begins, with each variation now moving from G to E^b, Exx.33a and 34 remain intact as aural 'marker posts'. It is worth reflecting that everything has been achieved with such care, climaxes built and quitted with such smoothness, harmony handled with such unobtrusive mastery, lines shaped with such architectural strength that the fact of its working equally well played backwards seems to be the most inevitable thing in the world. The success of this movement, as with all music, relies on its ability to balance intellectual strength with musical sensitivity so that one seems to be essential to the other.

At the end, rather than just letting the movement die away on unaccompanied violas, a five-bar coda is added in which violins, violas and cellos bring the music to rest on an E^b major chord whilst the first clarinet recalls Ex.33a before descending through the notes B natural, A and G - the last note sustained as the third of E^b. In addition to acting as a reminder of the E^b/G relationship explored in this movement, the foreign note of B natural draws the ear back towards the other crucial tonal region of the symphony.

Of the finale, Simpson says: "It restores the original tonic with the first stage running into E^b and the recapitulation occuring in G. An eventful coda is needed to bring back B major; when this is effected the movement finishes abruptly with no more ado." In other words, it broadly runs the same tonal course as the first movement, again with powerful climaxes in E^b and G.

There are two surprising aspects to this curious galumphing allegro: firstly the steady tempo marking, ♩ = 56-66 $^{4}_{\cdot}$, (Simpson notes in the score that "If this movement lasts less than 8 minutes it is too fast.") which gives the movement a sense of vigorous, but weighty activity. Secondly, a fairly clear sonata design is vastly expanded by the addition of a large coda - itself constituting no less than a third of the movement's five hundred and nineteen bars duration.

To deal with the first point: it is of crucial importance to the formal balance of this symphony that the finale, for all its robust good-humour, should not appear too lightweight. Its muscularity could be said to be that of the heavyweight prize-fighter, not the Olympic gymnast. Musically, its precursor is the finale of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. Not only are both driven along by the same obsessive rhythm:  but their earthy vigour can easily be dissipated by performance which is inattentive to matters of tempo and articulation. Beethoven's metronome markings have often been criticised as

being far too fast. In the case of No.7's finale, the ♩ = 72 marking of this 'Allegro con brio' is all too often exceeded by over-zealous conductors. In fact, the finale of No.7, taken at the correct speed and observing all the repeats, should itself last not less than eight and a half minutes and should be heavy and powerful, as befits music described by Simpson thus: "...this dramatic new use of tonality creates a limitless source of energy. But the whole thing is so schematic as to produce a deep-laid sense of something fundamentally static, a feeling of gigantic circular motion, accentuated by the key-structure, the system of repeats and the unified concentration upon rhythm. The energy is somehow mysteriously contained." It is clear that, in the finale of his Second Symphony, Simpson is responding to the phenomena he remarks upon in the above quotation. The "dramatic new use of tonality" refers to Beethoven's striking use of the keys of C major and F major as additional areas of tonal exploration to the usual ones of an A major symphony. It is not hard to spot the parallel between this and Simpson's own comprehensive use of G and E^b in relation to the B major/minor tonic of No.2.

The second point, concerning the extensive coda, must be considered in relation to the first movement. After that movement's last huge climax in G, the music quickly subsided to its close, dying away without any firm establishment of B as tonic. Given that the tonal argument of this symphony has so far been shown to be highly integrated throughout each

movement, it is quite natural that a large-scale coda should be required in the finale, both to balance the end of the first movement and to achieve a satisfactory establishment of B as a tonic for the whole symphony. Bearing these points in mind, the processes of the finale can now be described quite concisely.

The first four bars (**Ex.36**) contain five important elements from which almost everything in this movement is derived. The similarity of (a) to the driving rhythmic pattern which dominates Beethoven's finale has already been mentioned. Figure (b) is rhythmically an expansion of this and the use of interlocking thirds reflects, harmonically, the thirds-dominated tonal structure of the whole. The top line of (c) is a descending/ascending step of a major second and this is immediately seized upon at the beginning of (d) and combined with (a) - the subsequent unfolding of (d) (which is a long melody of some thirty-six bars) is almost entirely step-wise. The descending bass line (e) is made up entirely of major thirds: the very notes which provide the Symphony's main tonal areas - B, G, D# (E^b).

These elements propel the music for ninety bars, during which the tonality of B major is never in any doubt, until the strident interruption of a bare fifth in G on the trumpets (and confusion added by a sustained A^b on horns) causes the music to move to the other 'intermediary key' of E^b for the second subject. This, by contrast, is soft and delicate and relates to

the first in terms of the use of descending major thirds and the 'f' interruption of Ex.36a: **Ex.37.**

The second bar of Ex.37, with its descending thirds, is to prove important in building climaxes in the movement and now proceeds to do that, joined by Exx.36b and c to provide a furious tutti in E^b. This tutti relates to the first big climax at fig.20 in movement 1, not only tonally, but by the common use of the descending chromatic idea, Ex.26 - here combined with Ex.37b. The climax breaks off, leaving trumpets and drums asserting a major third in E^b to the rhythm of Ex.37b. The dynamic drops suddenly to 'pp' for the start of the 'development'.

'Development' is of course an inadequate term for music which is in a constant state of development anyway. However, the most important aspect of this fairly brief section (eighty-three bars) is that it transforms two figures from Ex.36. Firstly, Ex.36e becomes an important idea - the second major third now turned into a fourth, thereby generating strong tonal implications for what is a tonally exploratory passage. Secondly, Ex.36d becomes slightly more fragmented: **Ex.38**, and becomes the basis of much imitative sequential writing. The two combine to drive the music (with the help of a crescendo drum roll on the dominant) to the point of recapitulation - now in the 'intermediary key' of G.

The recapitulation of the first subject is now condensed to thirty-eight bars with, towards the end, 'fff' horns enthusiastically underlining the increased importance of Ex.36e. It is the horns too who have the second subject (still in G) - though only the first two bars are used. This is combined with the 'new' version of Ex.36d as quoted in Ex.38 - the music is, of course, still developing, and again the second bar of Ex.37 is used to generate a powerful climax. As before, the climax combines Ex.26 and Ex.37b: now in G and corresponding to the second main climax of the first movement (from fig.32). Again, this subsides and the long coda now begins.

The coda is, in effect, a second development, not least because it utilises the same two ideas heard simultaneously with Ex.38 in close canon between violins I and II and, again, the material is developed sequentially with the tonal centre changing approximately every two bars. The first phase of this is heard on the strings with woodwind interrupting with recollections of Ex.36c. Development of Ex.38 now extends to the wind also and timpani make a determined attempt to assert tonal stability with fortissimo attacks of Ex.36a. At fig.35, the music reaches the key of C and, with splendidly impetuous vigour, is immediately wrenched downwards by a semitone to land abruptly in B and a return of the material of the first subject group. Of course, this by no means provides a satisfactory tonal resolution and the brass and timpani now play a series of

fortissimo minor thirds beginning in F minor - as far away as possible from B. These minor thirds then rise in tonality on each entry, the tonic note for each entry being F, A, C♯, F respectively - in other words the tonality is rising by a major third on each apperance - and, inevitably, the music returns to the original F. One more fortissimo minor third, this time a tone higher in G, re-establishes the major third-based tonal relationship to the tonic B, which can now be hammered home with confidence. Marked "fff *grandisonante* con *fuoco*", the trumpets proclaim what is in fact a final metamorphosis of the symphony's very opening bar, and momentarily touching upon E^b major, the symphony speeds to its jubilant conclusion with Ex.36a finally driving home the key of B with absolute finality.

Notes

1. 'Classical' is here used as a term of convenience signifying the work of Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven and their contemporaries.
2. See footnote to score (p.44).
3. Pike, L.: note on Quartet No.9. Sleeve note to Hyperion LP.
4. In the case of the outer movements, the extremes of tempo, 𝅗𝅥. = 60-72 and 𝅗𝅥 = 56-66 respectively, are notated rather perversely in the published score. In the first movement the fastest possible speed is indicated above the woodwind and the slowest above the strings. This procedure is reversed on the first page of the finale.

SYMPHONY NO.3 (1962)

The six years separating the Second and Third Symphonies saw the composition of only one large-scale work: the Violin Concerto (1959). Written for Ernest Element (for whose quartet the first three String Quartets were also composed) it is quite a substantial piece, lasting almost forty minutes. However, the composer is not keen on the work and, though he has mentioned the idea of revising it, the process would be extremely laborious, so one suspects that it's current withdrawal from Simpson's list of works is permanent.

However, there are no doubts about the quality of Simpson's next major work, the Third Symphony. In it, Simpson realizes, with greater power and control than before, the principles of organic development and tonal argument which were strongly in evidence in the first two symphonies. Once again, the approach to form is highly original; in this case the symphony is in two movements, each lasting about a quarter of an hour, the first being a stormy sonata-allegro and the second a unique "composed accelerando, but with the dynamics repressed" (Simpson's own description).

The source of the music's extraordinary power is, again, tonal conflict - this time between the keys of B^{b} and C. (It is interesting to note that in each of these first three symphonies the areas of tonal contention have become

progressively closer: in No.1 it was the difference of a tritone; in No.2, that of a major third; now it is a major second.) Put simply, the first movement seeks to consolidate B^b minor by resisting the pull of C, whilst the second movement begins in B^b minor but ultimately establishes C major. Additionally, the two tonal regions are associated with certain emotional characteristics i.e. B^b minor is always related to music of stormy or menacing character and C is (in the words of Hugh Ottaway) "felt as a region of promise"[1]. - something towards which the music aspires.

Another feature of this symphony is a stronger sense of rhythmic definition displayed by the material. This inevitably results in the material being more obviously 'thematic' than in the earlier symphonies and, consequently, more immediately memorable. This is particularly important in the first movement - the only real sonata-allegro in Simpson's symphonies - where the very idea of recapitulation dictates that thematic material must be clearly recognisable and have a strong, self-contained identity.

The first movement begins softly with a sustained octave C on the violins. Against this the third flute and first clarinet set up a strange series of ascending semitonal clashes: **Ex.39.** The entry of the second flute and second clarinet is in canon with the first and the canon is continued with the entry of a third pair of instruments (piccolo and horn). These weird

oscillations make the violins' C tonally unstable and, a tremolando crescendo culminates in a tiny figure answered by the timpani and lower strings: **Ex.40.**

Two aspects of fig.'x' make it disruptive: firstly (and obviously), its movement upwards to the D after so long on a sustained C (the upward step of a tone anticipating in microcosm what happens, tonally, in the symphony as a whole); secondly, it is a cross-rhythm - a 3/4 unit imposed upon a carefully prepared 2/2 pulse. The combination of these elements serves to completely undermine the stability of C and the first subject proper erupts in B^b minor: **Ex.41.** The first bar of this example is a two-part idea, in contrary motion, each part having a distinct character but designated 'y^1' and 'y^2' due to their (at this stage) mutual dependancy. The second bar is the first of several rhythmic transformations of 'x' (given here as 'x^1'), and it forms a kind of imperfect cadence as it moves from the tonic B^b to a chord of the dominant $\sharp$7th (final crotchet beat) with the tonic note still sounding on the lower horns. This two-bar phrase is immediately repeated in bars 3 and 4 of Ex.41, but with a more developed version of 'y^2' transposed up a tone to C (exemplifying the B^b/C tonal conflict of the work) and with 'y^1' now a minor third higher. This lends the third bar a greater sense of intensity than the first, not only because it is at a higher pitch but also due to the new tonal conflict between 'y^1' and 'y^2'. In answer to this, the fourth bar of Ex.41 returns strongly to B^b minor, this time

beginning on the minor third of that key and ending on the dominant 7th in F (i.e. the dominant of the dominant).

Development of this material begins immediately after the dramatic one-bar general pause starting with the melodic shape of 'x^1' (without its characteristic rhythm) in major thirds on clarinets, bassoons and horns (x^2), and continuing with a slowed down derivation of 'y^1's descending semiquaver scale, heard on piccolo, flute, oboes and trombones (also in major thirds). This is punctuated by powerful timpani interjections - the simplest imaginable reference to the 'x' rhythm and one which is to prove immensely important (x^3): **Ex.42.**

It is worth pointing out that the unusual doubling in this passage of flute/piccolo, oboes and trombones in widely spaced registers is to become a characteristic feature of Simpson's orchestral style from this work onwards. His orchestral imagination is clear and individual and this frequently manifests itself in unexpected orchestral textures which, while never distracting attention from the symphonic argument, enhance the harsh, steely power so typical of his musical invention.

As with the first two bars of the previous example, Ex.42 is repeated, transposed up a tone and this culminates in a climactic moment in which upper woodwind, brass and upper strings repeat fortissimo syncopated A's whilst trumpets and

trombones play a further transformation of 'y' against a powerful descending scale of B^b major on bassoons, contrabassoon, cellos and basses, which eventually comes to rest on a sustained low C exploiting the resonant lowest note of the cellos and basses doubled by tuba and bassoons.

This moment (fig.3 in the score) attempts to re-establish C as the tonic, but its effectiveness as a tonic has been undermined by the B^b *minor outburst at fig.2. C is now* simultaneously challenged by the oscillating semitonal clash of Ex.39, but this time between B^b and A (1st violins, with 2nd violins playing the pattern in reverse - i.e. A/B^b - and an octave lower). This is a moment of strong tonal contention and is sustained through a five-bar diminuendo. In the fourth bar, the conflict between B^b and C is temporarily neutralised by the trumpets who sustain a pianissimo B natural. This sets off another chain of rising semitonal clashes similar to that at the opening (Ex.39), culminating in another fortissimo statement of Ex.41 - this time beginning on F# and again moving up a tone after two bars. The build-up to Ex.41 contains a new detail: a rushing semiquaver figure on the violins, which the ear relates to the semiquaver idea of Ex.41 as these are the only semiquavers to have been heard so far: **Ex.43.**

At this point it is important to summarize what has so far happened: two long, mysterious crescendi have each culminated in a huge fortissimo tutti, the first beginning in B^b minor and

the second, a major third lower. There is a clear structural precedent in the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony which also begins with a mysterious crescendo, moves towards a fortissimo statement of the main theme in the tonic (at bar 15) and then repeats the process with the second statement of the main theme a major third lower (b.51). Such a correspondance could be coincidental or subconcious, especially for a composer so greatly influenced by Beethoven, but further comparison of the two shows the relationship of the two movements to be more profound.

As has already been shown, the analogy is not merely gestural but tonal and this deeper relationship forces one to compare the two movements further.

After the second statement of Ex.41 the music (dispensing this time with the General Pause) develops Ex.42, now in quavers. This relates to the way Beethoven develops the semiquaver figure from the end of his first fortissimo statement (bb.19-20) and forms a series of antiphonal exchanges between the strings and wind (bb.55-61): **Ex.44.**

In the Beethoven, this culminates in an extended tutti passage where, previously, the climax had disintegrated. Exactly the same thing happens in the Simpson in which the vehement three-part antiphonal exchange of Ex.42x^3 comes to rest on a pedal C sustained in the brass (fourth bar of Fig.5).

Beethoven also sustains a pedal note to powerful effect in bars 63-5 and 67-9 though in this case it is the dominant (A) whereas Simpson sustains the supertonic (C). However, it is worth remembering that the Beethoven movement begins 'in A'; in fact, until the D minor ff tutti at bar 17, the movement could well be in A major/minor. The C in Simpson's symphony fulfils the same function though here the supertonic, or enhanced dominant (i.e. dominant of the dominant), replaces the dominant as the tonal area from which the tonic is approached.

Another important feature of this passage in the Beethoven is the contrary motion between upper and lower parts (bb.64-65, 69-70) and its implied canonic treatment (in bar 65, the upper part imitates the lower part from the previous bar and vice versa). Not only are the woodwind and strings in the Simpson in contrary motion but they are also canonic: **Ex.45.**

The last bar of this example shows how the woodwind decorate the strings' third and fourth beats of the previous bar by the addition of quavers. A bar later this results in the strings and woodwind coming together in descending unison quavers, always staccato and accented on every down-beat. At the third bar of Fig.6, three horns add a fortissimo sustained chord of the notes E, G, B^b - or the dominant 7th of F with the root of the chord, C, missing. This is a preparation for the second subject in the traditional dominant.

It will be noticed that, at bar 74, Beethoven introduces contrasting material in the woodwind after a long tutti. The passage also serves to establish the key of the second subject (in this case B^b major). Simpson does likewise at three bars before Fig.7 with a descending sequential link to the second subject. This passage is quite unconventional in its scoring: three horns doubled two octaves higher by three piccolos - another of Simpson's characteristic combinations. (He is particularly fond of the shrill sonority of the piccolo and asks all three flautists to double them in Symphonies 4, 5 and 8 as well as in this one.)

The second subject group also has a strong affinity with the Beethoven equivalent. Here Beethoven constructs an idea made up of two independent, but complementary, parts - a melody for the woodwind against a rising semiquaver figuration in the strings: **Ex.46.** This passage marks a crucial point in the tonal argument of Beethoven's Ninth due to its tonal ambivalence. The whole symphony is concerned with the relationship between D and B^b and here, at the beginning of the B^b major second subject, the music is momentarily caught between the two keys. In his book **Beethoven, Sibelius and the Profound Logic**, Lionel Pike perceptively comments that the first two bars of the strings accompaniment could equally be in D minor or B^b major. One could go further and say that this is also true of the beginning of the woodwind melody, the key only being defined by the E^b in the third bar.

Simpson's equivalent, naturally, differs due to the different tonal relationships being explored. His second subject tends towards F but is no more 'in the dominant' than the first subject was 'in the tonic'. Nevertheless, clear analogies exist. Firstly, the section begins with two separate, but complementary lines - like the Beethoven - one in the woodwind, the other, simultaneously, in the strings: **Ex.46b.** It will be noted that the string figure, which rises through a minor 7th, is clearly derived from fig.y^2, whilst the woodwind line can be traced to the sixth bar of Fig.5 (Ex.45b, third bar) which is itself derived from the sixth bar of Fig.2 (Ex.42). Secondly, the passage is, like the Beethoven, tonally ambivalent: the strings and piccolos and oboes imply F major/minor, whilst the 1st clarinet and bassoons hold a dominant 7th without the fifth of E (tonally as far away from the tonic as one can get) moving, every third bar, to an anacrusis on a simple major chord (the 'region of promise' refered to earlier - which certainly shines through the texture very noticeably).

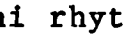
At this point, Beethoven builds two climaxes in B^b (bb.95 and 102). Simpson just builds one climax but it is done in two stages. Firstly, between Figs.8 and 9 he takes Ex.46b and transposes it up a tone (also altering the scoring) combining it with a broken chord on the dominant 7th without the fifth on the strings. This pattern is derived from bars 88-91 in the Beethoven: **Ex.47.** The second stage involves a highly intense

development of the woodwind figure from the second bar of Fig.7 over an F pedal (whose rhythm seems to relate more closely to the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth than the Ninth!): **Ex.48.** The passage serves both to build up tension and to prepare, tonally, the powerful ff outburst in B^b major at four bars before Fig.10. This bar is immediately answered by two bars of quiet clarinets and first horn, marked 'dolce', before it returns, again ff, this time in D^b. The alternation in rapid succession of these two elements is clearly derived from bb.102-107 of the Beethoven, which also presents the second ff outburst in varied form (b.107) to prepare for the striking entry of flute, violins and violas at b.108 in B major.

Although, at this early stage in the work, Beethoven's introduction of B major appears to be somewhat tangential, it is to have long-term tonal consequences, as can be seen from bb.837-842 of the finale and bb.171-6 of the scherzo. Simpson's analogy is to introduce a similarly unrelated, though ultimately relevant, key - E major, whose implied appearance was noted at Fig.7 and whose importance will shortly become apparent. This passage (three bars before Fig.10 in the score) also relates to the Beethoven in its rapid change of texture after the tutti in the previous bar.

Beethoven returns to B^b major/minor by means of a wonderfully hushed and mysterious series of modulations for strings in even semiquavers (bb.114-119) and this passage is

transferred to the Simpson version to produce perhaps the most immediately striking analogy in the whole piece: **Ex.49**

At this point, Beethoven builds up tension to the exposition's powerful conclusion, first of all, by the reintroduction of the timpani rhythm  from the first subject. Simpson does the same - in this case, by the introduction of a new derivation of 'x' (anticipated in the final bar of Ex.49 but played in the three bars of Fig.11 by cellos and 1st bassoon). The second stage of this build-up in the Beethoven is marked by the introduction of rushing demisemiquavers on violins and violas (bb.132-7) - Simpson introduces semiquavers (the movement is in alla breve time) derived from Ex.45 in the basses and cellos at six bars after Fig.11 and in the next six bars they spread through the whole string section to reach a fortissimo climax.

At bars 138-44, Beethoven alternates fortissimo tuttis with soft legato phrases on upper woodwind. Simpson's musical parallel involves a development of Ex.41 for woodwind combined with another version of 'x' against a striking sonority of flute and piccolo in their high register and three trombones: **Ex.50**. The fact that both these passages are in B^b major, from a comparative point of view, is unimportant, as the areas of tonal contention are different in each work. However, it is worth pointing out that, in the Beethoven, this B^b major section has shaken off some of the ferocity associated with the

D minor first subject. Similarly, in the Simpson, the fact that this passage is in B^b major results in music of a rather less vehement nature than the B^b minor of the first subject. It is also about to have important consequences in the tonal scheme of the second subject group (which is more complex than the Beethoven).

The B^b major idea played by oboes, clarinets and bassoons in Ex.50 turns to the minor at the fifth bar of Fig.12 and is immediately taken over by the upper strings (doubled by two piccolos) in E minor over a sustained G in the bass (i.e. the first inversion of E minor): **Ex.51.** As has already been remarked, E is the key at the furthest remove from B^b. However, it is closer to the other main tonal area, C. This is particularly so when E is in first inversion as it can be interpreted as a V^{13}-I progression in C. This is what happens in the bar before Fig.13 (see Ex.51), though, as C major has not yet been consolidated as a tonality it is heard with an added flattened 7th. By presenting C major in this way, Simpson is skilfully preparing for the end of the exposition in F major, but, before that, a codetta (relating to bars 150-7 in the Beethoven) has the effect of an 'interrupted' cadence as the V^{13}-$I^{\flat 7}$ progression of one bar before Fig.13 moves (by chromatic movement in the bass) to $VI^6\#3$ at Fig.13 itself. This chord, with its bare fifths in the treble and major third deep down in the bass is one of the genuinely 'Beethovenian' sounds to recur in Simpson's music. It is a spacing of which both

composers are fond. Compare Fig.13 in the Simpson with Beethoven's treatment of the same chord at bar 30 of the finale of No.9. In both cases the composers make this straightforward major triad sound like a new discovery.

The listener is adjusting to the surprise of the progression described above when, at the seventh bar of Fig.13 Simpson prepares another harmonic shock - a grinding dissonance (characterised by three screaming piccolos in their high register) resolves, via a chord of E^b, A^b, B^b, C and F# on brass with strings insisting on C and B^b, onto an F major triad scored for trombones, lower strings and three piccolos: **Ex.52.** At this point, the exposition ends and so do the close similarities between this movement and the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth. This is inevitable. The material of each work, as we have pointed out, is very different. Simpson has built his exposition as a close structural parallel with the Beethoven; now the implications of his own material must be followed if he is to avoid creating the proverbial square peg in a round hole.

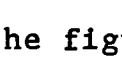
Nonetheless, certain broad analogies exist and will be pointed out in the course of the analysis. Firstly, Beethoven begins his development by expanding upon the symphony's mysterious opening. Simpson does likewise. Once again, violins sustain an octave C - though its effectiveness as a tonic has now been undermined by the previous F major chord. The feeling

is now much more that of a dominant. The quiet semitonal clashes of Ex.39 begin again - this time on horn IV and bassoon I, piccolo I and oboe I. However, instead of the expected crescendo, the progress of the music is halted by a nine-note chord spread, 'ppp', across the entire orchestra: **Ex.53(a)**. The chord is notable for the preponderance of fifths in its spacing and it serves to halt any progress in the music towards establishing C as a tonic. Immediately following this chord, the music touches on B^b major (i.e. the triad is sustained in horn, violas and 2nd violins at the seventh bar of Fig.15) with oboes playing 'x' in its original version (see Ex.40) on the notes F and G. This sets off the semitonal oscillations once more, now between violas, cellos and two piccolos, only to result in another soft sustained chord, of even greater complexity: **Ex.53(b)**.

This chord contains all twelve notes of the chromatic scale and, again, fifths tend to be a feature of the instrumental spacing. From this symphony onwards, twelve-note chords are not an unusual feature of Simpson's works. They are usually soft, always spread across an extremely wide compass and are constructed with great attention to the intervals set up between the pitches. They have nothing to do with the twelve-note method of composition but hover like a thick tonal fog in what is a predominantly lean contrapuntal texture.

This particular twelve-note chord succeeds in dislodging B^b major and the preceding passage is repeated in a rescored version transposed a semitone lower to A. At Fig.17 a new, and important, derivation of Ex.41 y^1 is heard in canon at one bar's distance between violin I and three flutes: **Ex.54.** Its semitonal transposition in the second phrase reflects the tonal tendency of the previous passage. On its third repetition, the phrase is a semitone lower still and the crescendo which has grown all the way through this passage erupts into another dense chord - this time fortissimo and made up of successive entries of pairs of instruments in fifths: violins on G and D, trumpets on B^b and F, trombones on D and A, flutes and oboes on F# (obs.& fl.2) and C# (fl.1&3), horns on A and E, and clarinets on C and G - nine notes of the chromatic scale - with bassoons, lower strings and low brass playing a menacing version of 'x' on the notes C# and D#. As if in protest at this, the first violins play a passionate, but fragmented, version of 'x' which quickly collapses. With 2nd flute and 1st bassoon playing a slowed down version of the descending group in 'y^1' the music comes to a halt. The analogy with the 'ritard' woodwind phrases in Beethoven's Ninth (bars 195-197 and 213-215) is clear as is the ensuing three-part fugue based on the first subject (c.f. Beethoven: b.218 etc., Simpson: Fig.18 etc.)

The fugue subject in Simpson's movement is yet another version of 'y^1': **Ex.55a,** and it is immediately presented with

the countersubject (as in the Beethoven). Simpson derives his countersubject from the descending pattern at Fig.6 and, like Beethoven, interchanges the parts at the entry of the answer (six bars before Fig.19) so that, instead of the countersubject continuing on the second violins, it switches to 1st and 2nd bassoons and violas whilst the second violins play what turns out to be a second countersubject derived from an inversion of 'y^1': **Ex.55b.** With the third entry of the subject at Fig.19 on high woodwind, the first countersubject moves to first violins and violas (joined by second violins), whilst the second is taken over by cellos, basses and bassoons. Behind this triple invertible counterpoint are softly sustained chords on muted brass - A^b minor followed by F# major with flattened 7th, then D major first inversion, C major plus flattened 7th and finally (with the third entry of the subject) G# minor first inversion. It is only at this point that the dynamics begin to rise above pianissimo. The quiet but dense texture combines with the increasing prominence of the figure  from Ex.42x^3 to create a remarkably sinister atmosphere. One of the qualities which distinguishes this symphony from its predecessors is its power of suggestion - the feeling that great force is being contained just below the surface. This is particularly evident in the development section and in the second movement.

Through Figs.20 to 22 the development of the three contrapuntal parts and the rhythmic idea of Ex.42x^3 becomes increasingly intense until, at Fig.22, a C major climax of

considerable grandeur is achieved for four bars in which the melodic potential of the fifths from the chord of Ex.53 is impressively realised: **Ex.56.** This passage is the most powerful reference to C major heard so far, but it will be noticed that, even here, it is undermined by the imitation between flutes 2 and 3, clarinets, second violins and trombones (derived from Fig.9, Ex.48), and the tonality is soon pulled, via the relative minor, back towards B^b at Fig.23 (B minor, first inversion, or D major^{+6} on first quaver of Fig.23, to B^b major in the second half of the bar, to B major in the third bar of Fig.23): **Ex.57.**

The first violin figure at Fig.23 moves through second violins, violas and back to first violins, each time a semitone higher in tonality though displaced by octaves. Against this, the accompaniment rises through the woodwind to arrive at an antiphonal exchange with the upper strings. This exchange involves the quiet chromatic descent of the repeated four-note chord against a rising chromatic line in the bass doubled at the fifth and ninth by bassoons, clarinets, trombones and violas. The result is a quiet but firm consolidation of B^b major at four bars after Fig.24. With the entry of piccolo and clarinet 1 at six bars after Fig.24 playing a new version of Ex.41y^2 and then, at two bars before Fig.25, the flutes and second horn with a transformation of part of the second subject (Ex.46b, 4th and 5th bars), the tonality rises in terraces a minor third apart: B^b, D^b, E. This last key has so far been

associated with the key of C and at four before Fig.26 the music moves, for a moment, into an unclouded C major: **Ex.58.** For seven bars this quiet, gentle music calmly modulates through G major and A major until, in the third bar of Fig.26, it inclines briefly towards B^b minor before moving into a soft, mysterious seven-bar passage which begins in E^b and modulates, again down a fifth, to A^b.

The re-entry of the trumpets and timpani on C playing $Ex.42x^3$ provokes a rapid crescendo which spreads through the orchestra to produce a massive tutti on a first inversion C major chord (Fig.27). This is the moment of recapitulation - the high woodwind are playing the rocking semitonal clashes of Ex.39, but now 'fff'. Against continued C's in trumpets and timpani and rocking contrary motion semitones on piccolos and horns, the rest of the orchestra plunges into the first subject in its original B^b minor.

As with the Beethoven, the development section of this movement is relatively short - 139 bars against 155 bars of the exposition and 214 bars of the recapitulation and coda (the Beethoven movement works out at 159 bars of exposition, 141 bars of development and 247 bars of recapitulation and coda). The reason is that, in both cases, the development spills over into the recapitulation which is not literal and a large coda is added. One important respect in which Simpson diverges from the Beethoven model is that, although both movements have an

enormously powerful moment of recapitulation, Beethoven prepares the return of the tonic and the first subject with great care over many bars whereas, in the Simpson, the moment is a continuation of the B^b/C conflict of the whole movement. The result is that the return of the first subject is somewhat less obvious in the Simpson than in the Beethoven.

Simpson expands the first subject in three ways: firstly by extending contrapuntally the upper part of Ex.41, secondly by using a fragmented version of the lower part combined with an inversion of y^1's semiquaver group and, finally, by interrupting the progress of the music by the insertion, at four points, of dense chords spread 'ppp' across the full compass of the orchestra. The first and last are twelve-note chords and the second and third comprise eleven and seven notes respectively. In each case, certain instruments make crescendi on their particular sustained notes to produce widely spaced chords of A^b major, G^b major, C major and D^b major respectively. These are sustained during the statements of first subject material until the next chord. Throughout this passage, the trumpets and timpani continue their ostinato based on $Ex.42x^3$ but changing their note every few bars. The reason for this is that, at the moment of recapitulation, the repeated C's of trumpets and timpani are obviously incompatible with the prevailing B^b minor tonality, so they proceed to find an alternative note. Thus, they move C, C#, D, E, F, E, E^b, D, D^b,

back to C and down to B^b, and the first subject recapitulation ends at five before Fig.30 strongly in B^b minor.

The recapitulation of the 2nd Subject begins at the equivalent of Fig.8 - in other words omitting the first six bars of the second subject and it is a fifth lower than the original. Apart from its variation in scoring, the recapitulation is literal with the result that the complex tonal process described above now concludes in B^b minor.

The coda begins with the only slackening of tempo in the entire movement - seventeen bars marked 'pochettino meno' - and a contrapuntal development of y^1 (a slightly altered version of Ex.54 canonically combined with its free inversion). The accompanying thirds, in even quavers on violas and cellos tend to rise chromatically and are taken over by tremolando violins at Fig.31. An accelerando at three bars after Fig.38 leads back to Tempo 1 and a stormy three-part canonic passage based on y^1 over a rising bass-line. The whole passage has C as its tonal centre and comes to an end five bars after Fig.39 with a huge sforzando dominant seventh on the last crotchet beat of the bar.

At this point, a sudden pianissimo prepares for the most violent tonal conflict in the movement. Timpani play repeated quaver C's accenting the fourth and fifth quavers of the bar to combine with the trumpets who play $Ex.42x^3$ on repeated C's and

the violins and cellos both sustain a perfect fifth on C and G. Against this a solo oboe plays a C major (plus flattened 7th) version of Ex.41y[2]: **Ex.59.**

As the trumpets and timpani continue their ostinato C's, pairs of instruments successively enter with sustained perfect fifths. Violins are already playing C and G, piccolos enter with E and B, then bassoons with D and A, oboes with B and F#, first and second trombones with A^b and E^b, first and third horns with C# and F#. This forms another complex chord - eleven notes. The only missing note is of course B^b - the tonic and, as the general 'pp' swells to a sudden 'ff', third trombone and tuba with second violins, violas and cellos provide the missing fifth of B^b and F. The twelve-note chord then rapidly fades out leaving only the B^b and F on fortissimo tremolando strings. Whilst all this has been happening, the trumpets and timpani have doggedly clung to their repeated C's but now have no choice but to accomodate the B^b minor tonality. Timpani move down to B^b, trumpets up to D^b.

At Fig.41 a final transformation of Ex.41y[1] enters canonically in B^b minor on strings and woodwind. There is now no question as to the tonal outcome of this movement.

The final section of the coda is an impressive crescendo based on Ex.42 and set against a syncopated, chromatically rising accompaniment on violins and a chromatically rising

bass. The passage gains a sense of increased urgency by the gradual contraction of bar lengths - i.e. two bars of 5/2, two bars of 4/2, three of 3/2, three of 2/2, four of 3/4 and thirteen of 2/4. At Fig.44, the dynamic now having reached 'ff', a series of grinding, tonally unrelated, bare fifths represent perhaps the only moment in the work which reflects both the predilection for chords with the third missing and the harsh, sometimes violent, musical world of the symphony's dedicatee, Havergal Brian. Finally, with four bars marked 'fff' and a terse V-I cadence, the movement comes to a splendidly choleric conclusion in B^b minor. The minor third is however taken for granted in the final chord, rather in the way that Beethoven ends his first movement simply with a unison D.

In the discussion of Symphony No.2, attention was drawn to the points of similarity between the finale and that of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. In the first movement of No.3 Simpson obviously takes things further and, now that some of his musical analogies have been discussed, the question remains as to why he has chosen to make them in the first place.

As far as the composer is concerned the answer is perfectly simple: "No comparison welcomed or intended! I just gave myself a lesson and then let fly in the second movement."[2]. This is fair enough. Composers have, throughout history, learned by either imitating works they admire or by finding their own musical analogies to an existing blueprint.

For example, Elgar said that the greatest composition lesson of his life was to write his own 'version', precisely similar in terms of bar length and formal division, of the first movement of Mozart's Fortieth Symphony. What makes Simpson's first movement unusual is that it is not only the work of a mature artist, as opposed to a beginner, but it is also the creative response of a composer who feels an uncommonly close affinity with another in such a way that this kind of approach stimulates, rather than stifles, his individual artistic expression. We can now begin to see what Hugh Ottaway means when, in his note accompanying the recording of No.3, he says: "It is music that could only have been written in the twentieth century, yet its deepest roots are in that most unfashionable of periods, the age of Beethoven.... There is no suggestion of going back and refurbishing an old stylisation; rather it is a matter of carrying forward creative principles felt to be perenially alive and relevant".

An increasing number of contemporary composers have, in recent years, professed an increasing creative concern with the music of Beethoven - Peter Maxwell Davies and Michael Tippett for example. Tippett's Fourth String Quartet contains reference to Beethoven's Grosse Fuge Op.133 in a manner which may be described as 'gestural'[3]. - that is to say, the material is used in a dramatic way which remains self-contained and does not imply development. To say that Simpson's reworking of a Beethovenian model is more profound is in no way intended to

cast aspersions on Tippett's response but is intended to show how fundamentally different Simpson's attitude to Beethoven happens to be. In the first movement of this symphony, Simpson is not attempting to take musical ideas from Beethoven and use them, critically or otherwise, in his own piece in terms of a commentary on the Beethoven. Nor is he producing 'Variations on a Theme'. For Simpson, the purpose of such an exercise is to learn more about the internal workings of a piece he loves in the way he enjoys best - i.e. creating his own music. Three particular ways of listening to this music spring to mind from the innumerable variety of options: 1) it can be heard as pure music, unrelated to external models - which is how it has been heard for the past twenty-three years; 2) the listener can find musical satisfaction in identifying the various analogies; 3) as a result of (2), the composer would hope that this would lead the listener to find new things in the Beethoven model.

Further discussion of such matters will occur in the next chapter so, bearing in mind the concern with 'analogy' already discovered in this symphony, attention is now focused on the second movement.

This movement lasts about as long as the first and, viewed in terms of the whole work, could be said to combine the functions of slow movement, scherzo and finale. However, it is more complex than that and it should be stressed that there is

at no point in the movement any sense of conventional formal division.

To clarify what happens it is necessary to refer to the composer's own remarks on the movement:

"[The movement is] Nature music in a sense - the only piece mine which has an origin in some external situation.... Put programmatically, the situation is this: a sleeper wakes in the early morning, his mind passively receptive; the first bird-songs begin, gradually becoming the dawn chorus; the mind quietly absorbs and reflects until at last a tremendous sense of excitement is experienced; an energy that cannot be repressed"[4].

Despite the fact that this is an 'external situation', the real activity of this scenario as it affects the music is internal - everything leads towards an expression of the final phase of the above description: "an energy that cannot be repressed." This is represented musically by a strikingly simple analogy - the movement is, in the words of the composer, "a huge compressed accelerando but with the dynamics repressed". The music begins Adagio and gradually speeds up to Presto, the dynamics only occasionally rising to 'f', until the massive 'fff' outburst at the second bar of Fig.93 drives the symphony to its dramatic conclusion.

By "composed accelerando" the composer implies an accelerando achieved not by speeding up the basic pulse, as in a conventional accelerando, but by gradually increasing the amount of activity within that pulse and creating new tempi from this. For example, the first tempo change, which occurs in the fifth bar of Fig.51, is achieved by deriving the new crotchet beat from the triplet crotchets of the flutes and second violins in the previous bar. Similarly, at Fig.67, the new crotchet beat is again derived from the speed of the triplet crotchets of the preceding bar. It is, however, worth noting that, after giving the opening tempo of ♩ = c.50, the composer does not provide another metronome mark, even when he actually does indicate an accelerando (or, as he puts it, "pochettino mosso al... Allegretto") in the seven bars from Fig.56 to the new tempo. This leads one to conclude that the opening metronome marking is intended simply as a guide for the initial tempo and not the inviolable basic pulse to which all succeeding tempi must mathematically relate. In a structure of this kind such an attitude is wise because if one did not allow the possibility for careful adjustment of the tempo by the conductor, the result in performance could be unfortunate. An orchestra of eighty musicians is not a machine and the discrepancies of tempo which occur in even the most severely regimented performance can mean that an ingenious temporal scheme which works on paper may not be quite so successful in practice. Besides, such artifice has no place in Simpson's philosophy of symphonic form as a process of natural

development impelled by the force of the musical ideas themselves. So 'composed accelerando', in this case, means something more than metric modulation[2]. - it also refers to a gradual increase in momentum caused by a corresponding increase in musical activity. This is clearly seen at Fig.82 where the tempo changes from the 'Vivace', introduced at Fig.73, to 'Presto' but with the relationship of the crotchet pulse unchanged. What actually speeds up is the harmonic movement - the accelerando is literally 'composed'.

The idea of a structure in a state of constant evolution is applied to the way the material is treated as well as to the large-scale form. In the composer's words, "[The movement] all comes out of the first theme, changed as the pace changes".[5] This theme, given to the first violins at the opening, is an intense, arching line which rises through a crescendo and descends through a diminuendo: **Ex.60.**

This melody is, tonally, extremely ambiguous, suggesting a variety of harmonic implications. The principle reason for this ambiguity lies in the approach to the top C of bar three through a flat note (B^b) and its quittal through a sharp one - the reverse of one's usual expectation when listening to tonal music[6]. With the entry of the B^b in the second bar a kind of a modal B^b tonality is suggested for the first two bars (B^b approached through a flattened 7th) but, by the third bar, C proves to be the strongest tonal contender (due to its placing

at the top of the phrase and its dynamic emphasis) - again approached through a flattened 7th. The descent in the third and fourth bars, implies E before B^b major is firmly stated for the first two minim beats of the fifth bar - to be undermined by a flattened 7th in the bass on the third beat. This tends to imply E^b, which is confirmed by the entry of the second violins in the sixth bar.

So, to sum up, F minor (the minor third *at the opening*) acts as a possible approach to a modal B^b (second bar, last beat) which, in turn, proves to be an approach to C. Descent through a sharpened 7th implies E before the music settles back to B^b. The two important points to note are: 1) the continuation of the B^b/C conflict from the first movement; and 2) the importance of the flattened 7th - also apparent in the first movement. Such ambiguities, of course, are essential to any musical idea if it is to be used as the basis of a gradually evolving structure.

Intervallically, the phrase is highly compact - the rising minor third and major second of the opening are reversed (a semitone higher) in the third bar and the whole phrase consists entirely of minor thirds, and major and minor seconds.

The answering phrase on the second violins (after rising through an extra minor third in the sixth and seventh bars) is exactly similar to the opening, but its transposition of an

octave and a major second lower than the original results in the phrase reaching its apex on B^b, not C (again the B^b/C relationship is evident).

The early stages of this movement alternate passages of imitative treatment of Ex.60 with sustained chordal passages (anticipated in bar 5). The four bars before Fig.47 are characteristic - consisting mainly of conventional triads in first inversion. Attention was drawn earlier to the particularly 'Beethovenian' sound of these first inversion chords as used at Fig.13 of the first movement - the same is true of this passage: **Ex.61.** Even in this calm, serene music the B^b/C conflict is still in evidence as the first two bars of the example move towards a B^b major chord but the phrase ends on a C major chord. Both chords are rendered inconclusive by being placed in first inversion thus offsetting any potentially cadential feeling which they may imply.

The next development of the first theme begins, in the bar after Fig.47, with six bars of double canon - first and second violins / violas and cellos, the texture constantly punctuated by an accented semitonal figure which first appeared in bar three (marked 'z'). This idea fulfils a similar function to that of 'x' in the first movement, dominating the music and subtly changing identity as the music proceeds. The counterpoint thins out to three parts (second bar of Fig.48) then to basically two parts (three bars before Fig.49). It is

at this point that Simpson employs an unusual and characteristic instrumental doubling (2nd and 3rd beats - one line given to cellos and second violins three octaves apart, the other given to first violins, just below the seconds doubled two octaves below by the violas).

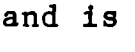
The next chordal passage (clarinets and muted horns at Fig.49) consists of chords of C major (first inversion), F# minor, C major (first inversion), F# major. The tritonal relationship of these chords influences the next contrapuntal development of Ex.60 at three after Fig.49. Here, instead of approaching the top of the phrase by two steps of a minor third, as the second violins did in the first two bars of Fig.45, the first violins here leap a tritone to the top of the phrase and 'z': **Ex.62.** This idea is taken up in the fifth bar of Fig.49 by the oboe and expanded into an eloquent solo - the first melodic line given to a wind instrument in a movement so far dominated by strings.

The soft chord sustained on the second beat of Fig.50, scored for flute, two horns, two trumpets, one trombone and violas, is derived from the use of the flattened 7th referred to earlier: **Ex.63.** The chord is, of course, a dominant 7th of G in third inversion, but the introduction in the next bar of a third inversion dominant 7th, this time as if it were 'in D', completely undermines the chord's function as a dominant. Such ambiguity is essential to this passage (as, indeed, it is to

the whole movement) and a further overlapping of what should be more accurately termed 'chords of the flattened 7th' occurs in the third bar of Fig.51 - $A^{b}7$ on wind joined by C^{7} on upper strings.

The rocking semitonal idea in minor thirds given to the horns in Ex.63 is taken up by second violins (flutes 2 and 3 doubling an octave lower) in the fourth bar of Fig.51. Now, however, the time values are shortened to crotchet triplets and these triplets become the basis of a new, faster tempo in the next bar, (the relationship marked in the score being $\mathrm{d.} = \mathrm{d}$ del prec.). The first bassoon takes up a shortened version of the opening violin theme - this time starting on C and instigating imitative entries of the theme on strings beginning successively on B, F, G, E, C♯, B^{b} (the last four entries are then repeated and respaced). The texture is punctuated by successive entries of the four pairs of woodwinds, each entry consisting of a descending quaver semitone followed by an accented, and sustained, semitonal clash - clearly a derivation of 'z': **Ex.64.** The combination of the increased tempo and the accented woodwind entries produces a very strong sensation of something gradually stirring into life - an impression totally in accordance with the music's programmatic associations. The cadential figures quoted in Ex.61 are further developed, first on the strings in the four bars before Fig.53 (a simplified version), then, at Fig.54, on the trumpets and trombones - this latter passage combining 'z' (trumpets) with the tritonal

progression from Fig.49. Between them (Fig.53) comes another passage notable for its unusual octave doubling: **Ex.65.** The passage is simply a two-part texture derived from the scalic ideas in the second half of the opening melody and presented both in the original descending shape and, simultaneously, in a freely inverted form. However, the fact that the lines are doubled at four and three octaves respectively creates the illusion of greater textural density than would normally be the case.

Contrary motion was, in fact, partially anticipated in the seven bars before Fig.52, with the overlapping entries of the opening melody, and is further exploited from the fourth of Fig.53 to Fig.54 (the brass entry already mentioned). This is basically a three-part texture with octave doublings (first violins doubled two octaves lower by first clarinet and, from three before Fig.54, by first piccolo at the unison; second violins doubled two octaves lower by second clarinet and one octave lower by first bassoon with first oboe doubling at the unison from four before Fig.54, third beat; and violas doubled by second bassoon at two octaves lower for the first two phrases and, thereafter, at the unison or one octave lower). Each of the scalic phrases consists of four notes in the rhythmic pattern  and is so disguised that one of the voices is always starting a new phrase on each beat.

The brass entry at Fig.54 is marked 'Poco rit' - such a rubato is rare in Simpson's music and this recurs when they re-enter with a further development of the tritonal harmonic idea at two before Fig.55 (this time joined by pizzicato cellos and basses playing a rising scalic figure). Between these entries comes a further development of the three-part string/woodwind texture - now with the doubling slightly extended by the addition of the three piccolos from five bars before Fig.55.

The cadential passage given to the trumpets and trombone in the two bars before Fig.55 comes to rest on a C minor chord at Fig.55 itself and this brief but definite confirmation of the C tonality, plus the slight rubato which leads up to it, lends the passage a strong feeling of one large-scale formal division coming to a close. This feeling is confirmed by the music which immediately follows. With the C minor brass chord still sustained, the first violins begin a section dominated by continuous quaver movement with a speeded up version of Ex.60: **Ex.66.** The tonal contention here is very clear - a C minor cadence is contradicted by the entry of the first violins in B^b minor with a line which tends towards C (the entry of the second violins - in imitation). The speeding up of Ex.60 and the removal of any rhythmic stress has resulted in harmonic implications entirely different to those experienced at the start of the movement - the accelerando is indeed being 'composed'.

Ex.66 is the basis of a three-part (initially) imitative texture between violins I/II and celli (beginning, respectively, on B^b, C and D) and again punctuated by accented wind entries similar to those heard at five bars before Fig.52 (Ex.64). The marking, 'quasi a tempo' at Fig.55 implies that the passage should begin slightly hesitantly and the speed should be gradually established through the seven bars of 'pochettino mosso' from Fig.56.

The next tempo change, at the eighth bar of Fig.56, retains the same crotchet pulse but reduces the bar-length from 3/2 (six crotchets) to 3/4 transforming the music into a graceful one-in-a-bar Allegretto. The new pulse is established by repetition (four times) of a two-part idea in a manner recalling the ostinato patterns often found in Bruckner's scherzos: **Ex.67.** The ostinato itself can be seen to be derived from Ex.66 (and, by extension, from the opening idea), the rising three-note pattern on second violins and violas coming from the fourth, fifth and sixth notes of Ex.66 and the accompanying figure from the last five-notes of the first violin phrase in the same example. Tonally, the music appears to be in F but the sustained D^b and B^b on piccolos and oboes confirms the F as a dominant of B^b minor. However, when the sustained notes cease, after three bars of the Allegretto, the music moves more definitely into F major/minor as the opening theme takes on a new guise, this time scored for solo bassoon and accompanied by the glassy sound of two piccolos: **Ex.68.** An

important new addition to the opening theme is the grace note preceding fig.'z'. It becomes increasingly important from this point onwards and its appearance on the piccolo at seven bars before Fig.57 and, at various subsequent points, on the same instrument sounds irresistably 'bird-like'. Yet, despite the programmatic associations, the grace-note figure can be seen as entirely germane to the movement due to its derivation from Ex.60.

The complementary chordal material of Ex.61 has not been abandoned either and a speeded-up version of the tritonal idea from two before Fig.47 is heard on the strings at Fig.57, and on wind at Fig.58. In between, the clarinet and violas develop the bassoon melody of Ex.68 accompanied by a descending chromatic bass whose provenance can be found in the ascending chromatic line of the second to fourth bars of Fig.56.

A further transformation of Ex.60 appears on the first violins in the third bar of Fig.58. This particular development exploits the opening of the original melody and, by the end of the fourth bar of Fig.58, is dominated by a rocking minor third in even quavers which gradually ascends chromatically. Against this, further contrapuntal development of Ex.60 occurs on the brass and is combined (at Fig.59) with a new staccato figure introduced on first piccolo and first oboe: **Ex.69.**

This idea is important: firstly, because it provides additional rhythmic impetus by the introduction of the semiquaver 'tag' at the beginning and end of the phrase and, secondly, the repeated-note quavers (combined with the violin quavers) serve to increase the pace of the music from crotchet movement to more or less continuous quaver movement. The figure is also subtly related to Ex.60 by its shape (the rising quavers of the third bar of Fig.59 relating to the upward motion of the melody's opening), the concluding semiquaver figure relating to 'z' and encompassing the overall interval through which Ex.60 descends between the beginning of bar 3 (C) and the beginning of bar 4 (E). Ex.69 becomes the basis of continuous imitation between Figs.59 and 62 and, against this soft but rapid music, a slower version of Ex.60 is heard (almost as slow as the very opening statement) first on trombones, beginning on G# (Fig.60), then on second flute, first oboe and first horn, beginning on B^b (Fig.61). The fluid tonality of the accompanying texture is inevitably dictated by whatever note is repeated at each of the imitative entries.

The speed increases still further at Fig.62 when, with the crotchet relationship unchanged, the time signature is reduced from 3/4 to 2/4. Again, there are two important elements to this passage: firstly, a series of entries at two-bar intervals based on a simplified version of Ex.60 appears, each entry occuring a tone lower than the previous one - E (picc.), D (cl.1), C (ob.1), B^b (bn.). Against this, the second element is

a series of entries of a single note on each crotchet beat preceded by the repeated semiquaver pattern from Fig.59 (Ex.69). These entries are also divided into two-bar groups in the following way: the first two bars of Fig.62 comprise the notes D, E, C, D; the second two bars, D, C, B^b, C; the third, C, B^b, A^b, B^b; and the fourth, B^b, A^b, B^b, G^b. So each two-bar group involves the note on which the complementary woodwind entry begins and the two whole tones below that note. The general tendency for imitative entries to occur at the interval of the major second has already been seen at Fig.55 (both in the string parts and in the woodwind entries). In the second bar of Fig.63 the strings divide into two groups: violins I&II and violas & cellos, each group playing alternately major and minor sixths to the same repeated semiquaver pattern. Each group plays on an alternate beat of the bar, the violins descending and the violas and cellos rising: **Ex.70.** The two parts come together to form a chord of A# minor in first inversion on the last quaver beat of two before Fig.64 and on the first beat of the next bar. This is, of course, an enharmonic B^b minor chord and it is immediately answered by a C major chord scored for three flutes and two bassoons.

Against a chromatically descending bass line (previously encountered at the third bar of Fig.57) the second violins and violas play a rising line which, when developed at the fifth bar of Fig.64 by first piccolo and muted first trumpet, proves to be a further transformation of the opening melody: **Ex.70.**

The passage culminates, at Fig.65, in a $^{4}2\text{-}^{3}1$ suspension in C major - in contrast to the D^{b} major/B^{b} minor implications of the melody at Fig.64. The passage which follows is another of the gradually built up twelve-note chords similar to those noted in the first movement. The chord is built up in the following way: each instrument sustains a note, preceding it by the semiquaver 'tag' mentioned at Fig.59, and starting from the G (picc. & trp. at Fig.65) the chord is built up chromatically with octave displacements until the complete chord is formed. The rate at which this happens is of one note/voice per crotchet beat. When all twelve notes are sustained (seventh of Fig.65) the chord is then gradually dismantled by the same process, but now in reverse (i.e. the instruments stop in chromatically descending order, rather than ascending). The result is that the last instrument stops by reiterating the semiquaver figure with which it started. When, during the building up of this chord, the point of greatest density is approached (sixth and seventh bars of Fig.65) another element is added - cellos and basses playing a further transformation of Ex.60 in crotchet triplets which cut across the 2/4 pulse. The phrase is based on the rising three-note figure of Ex.60 and its transposed inversion in the third bar acts as a further disturbance in a passage whose sudden harmonic density comes as something of a surprise.

From Figs.66 to 67 two further developments of Ex.71 alternate with two appearances of the triplet idea on cellos

and basses. These begin on F# and A respectively and their starting note is, in both cases, the root of a soft chord sustained on woodwind and brass - each preceded by the semiquaver rhythm which has been an important feature of this section and by a kind of a cadential figure on clarinets and bassoons consisting of a major second clash 'resolving' upwards to a minor third. Given the nature of the triplet theme, and its upward transposition on each appearance, it is inevitable that the ear detects a sense of the tonality being pulled gradually upwards during this section and, by the time the new tempo is reached at Fig.67, the tonal centre has moved towards B^{b} minor.

It is at this point that the significance of the triplet interjections is felt as they become the crotchet basis of the new 3/4 pulse. Therefore the relationship of the bar lengths remains the same ($\mathrm{d}.$ of the new 3/4 tempo = d of the old 2/4) though the number of beats per bar increases. This Allegro section is, of course, the second one-in-a-bar scherzo tempo of the movement - the first having occured just after Fig.56 - but this one is more like the 'Beethovenian' scherzos which occur in Simpson's later works like the Fourth and Ninth Symphonies and the Twelfth String Quartet. Its motivic starting point is the inversion of the opening intervals of the movement, as heard in bar 3 of Ex.60: **Ex.72.**

With music which moves with such rapidity one tends to feel the pulse in phrases of several bars. This is true of the passage from Fig.68 onwards where the ascending figure on the violas and oboes (derived from the woodwind 'cadential' idea in the fifth bar of Fig.66 and the opening minor third given to the violas) is felt as a five-bar phrase. The continued ascent (on violins, violas and cellos) from the sixth of Fig.68 is phrased according to the 'ffpp' accents working out (in numbers of bars) as 4+3+2+1, adding to the feeling of acceleration - a feeling reinforced by the descending bass line throughout this passage.

The imitative piccolo writing from the fourth bar of Fig.69, with each instrument sustaining a different beat of the bar, is reminiscent of a passage in Simpson's First Symphony (bar 544 onwards) - especially when taken up by the strings in a chromatically rising sequence at Fig.70. The material played by the strings from Fig.69 is a metamorphosis of the opening melody: now the intervals have been changed so that the whole melody has been completely, though organically, transformed. What remains, and makes the relationship identifiable, is the arching shape - though now the melody moves flatwards, tonally, on its descent rather than vice versa. The result is that C major and B^{b} minor feel to be the strongest tonal poles between which this melody veers: **Ex.73.**

The great swiftness of the music, as well as its delicacy (the dynamic level is still basically 'pp') make it peculiarly elusive from the conventionally analytical point of view. References to earlier material are suggested rather than stated - a case in point being the chords in the four bars before Fig.70. The attentive listener should immediately relate them to the development of the 'cadential' figures traced earlier (two bars before Fig.47 to Fig.58, via Fig.54 etc.). But, in substance, they do not relate to what has gone before in any definite way.

The music is moving too rapidly for any clear tonal centre to emerge, so when a single note is sustained the ear tends to fix upon that as a temporary tonal anchor. This occurs at the fourth bar of Fig.70 where, against the chromatically rising string development of the piccolo's imitative idea (heard at the fifth bar of Fig.69), the bassoons and contrabassoon obstreperously disturb the delicate texture with a sustained low B^{b}. This provokes a shrill cry from the first piccolo and first clarinet which, combined with the low B^{b} still rumbling ominously, gives the passage a more volatile atmosphere than anything heard so far.

After the low B^{b} is answered by the dominant (in the extreme bass of the tuba at five before Fig.71) the passage appears to disintegrate in a series of exchanges between the pairs of woodwinds concluding with two chirping piccolos - the

programmatic reference to birdsong is inescapable. There are two important ideas generated by this passage: firstly, the repeated quavers on the strings at Fig.72 are punctuated at the start of every other bar by a triplet figure - marked 'ffpp' and rising through a perfect fourth - which is shortly to prove significant. The second feature is the tendency, from Fig.72 onwards, for the piccolos to stress a hemiola pattern within two bar phrases - for example, the grace notes in the third bar of Fig.72 on the first and third beats of the bar and the second beat of the next bar. This emphasis persists until Fig.73 and the new tempo. The crotchet relationship remains the same but the tempo changes from 3/4 to 2/2 - the piccolo accents were a preparation for this.

Ostinato has proved to be an increasingly significant feature of the preceding section and this trend is now continued with second violins and violas providing a quasi-modal accompaniment in thirds and fifths to a regular pulse played by bassoons on the first and third beats of each bar and answered on the offbeats by the first violins which are preceded by the triplet 'gruppetto' first heard twelve bars earlier.

The passage initially takes A^b as its tonal centre but the raucous intervention of two oboes in D minor/major (fortissimo in the fifth bar of Fig.73) serves to contradict this. Not only are the two key centres as far apart as possible, but they are,

respectively, a tone below B^b and a tone above C - the main tonal centres of the whole work. The oboe idea at the fifth bar of Fig.73 is based on the beginning of Ex.60 and is now accompanied by rapid triplets on the second flute - derived from the triplet 'gruppetto' at the third bar of Fig.72: **Ex.74.**

The more or less constant accompanying figuration tends to rise chromatically throughout this passage until Fig.78 and the result is a sense of a gradually rising tonal centre. The various incursions of melodies based on Ex.74 (fourth of Fig.74, Fig.77, Fig.78) take as their starting point the note a tritone away from the bass line.

The development of Ex.74 reaches a definitive melodic statement at Fig.77 with a theme (in thirds - these have grown out of the accompaniment on violas and cellos) scored for flutes and clarinets and including a reference to an earlier development of the opening melody given in the last two bars of Ex.71: **Ex.75.** After this theme has been taken up by oboes and bassoons, a cadential figure is played 'pp' by the wind and brass - a V-I progression in G^b, with 'added notes' on flutes, clarinets and 2nd and 3rd horns, slips to a 2nd inversion chord of C major (a further development of the tritonal harmonic progression from two before Fig.47): **Ex.76.**

The version of Ex.75 which follows on violas and cellos is an extension of the original and, by Fig.80, moves into triplet

crotchets against the persistent exchange of 'gruppetti' on each crotchet beat. The cadential figure from Ex.76 is then developed into a series of V-I cadences which gradually move down by a semitone - C♯, C natural, B (C^b), B^b. The quiet but teeming activity of this passage, combined with the unusual pianissimo writing for full orchestra may remind one in passing of the 'Cortege' from **Doktor Faust** by Busoni - a composer Simpson greatly admires.

A crescendo in descending quavers (and based on 'z') leads into the final, fastest, tempo - Presto. Here the beat does not change, nor does the stress - it is in the amount of activity within the beat which increases.

The increasing sense of suppressed energy is emphasised by the marking 'molto ritmico' which is added to the mel dy first played by the second violins at Fig.82: **Ex.77.**

This is, in fact, yet another transformation of Ex.60 and retains the arching shape of the original as well as the prominent minor third near the opening. Every transforming element within it can be traced back to some point earlier in the movement; for instance, the tritone between the last beat of the second bar and the first of the following one relates to the rising tritone in the third and fourth bars of Fig.49 (which in turn relates to the brass cadence at Fig.49 itself) and the semiquaver descending scale in the third bar relates to

the fifth and sixth bars of Fig.70. The accompaniment in violas and cellos is taken from the accompaniment at Fig.73 and once again provides a chromatically rising outline against which Ex.77 is treated imitatively (the first three entries are each a major second higher than the last - reflecting a tendency previously noted).

The three-note pattern from the second and third bars of Ex.77 becomes increasingly prominent during the ensuing passage in which fragments of Ex.77 are developed at great speed until, at the sixth bar of Fig.85 a wind chord of the dominant 7th in C provokes a 'ffpp' F minor chord two bars later and scored for the lowest instruments of the orchesta. The reinforcement of this chord with a low accented timpani roll seems suddenly ominous and the 'resolution' into a low B^b minor chord at Fig.87 leads one to suspect that the music may yet turn back to the B^b minor which ended the first movement so fiercely. With the benefit of hindsight, the listener may well feel that here the music is, as it were, flexing its muscles in preparation for the sudden 'fff' outburst at the second bar of Fig.93 and - despite the general 'pp' dynamic - the music from the 'Presto' onwards, with its strong offbeat accents and rhythmic drive, does indeed seem more formidable than anything heard so far.

From Fig.87 to 93 it is quite a straightforward process to trace all the material back to the first four bars of Fig.82 and, due to the speed at which the material is being explored,

further elucidation of the motivic development is unnecessary. It is, however, worth pointing out how the three-note figure from the second and third bars of Ex.77 becomes the basis of a complete phrase from Fig.88 and from Fig.90 - the latter scored for the bizarre combination of flute and tuba at three (and briefly four) octaves apart.

The reappearance at two bars before Fig.93 of the crotchet triplets from Fig.80 does not so much herald the huge tutti as give way to it, for the three and a half bars leading up to it are actually marked diminuendo.

With the first of four cymbal clashes - the only percussion contribution to the entire work - the entire orchestra suddenly bursts in 'fff'. After almost fifteen minutes of quiet music, this comes as a considerable shock. Its sheer physical impact is highly characteristic of Simpson's music - another striking example occurs near the opening of the Fifth Symphony. The very opening of this outburst takes C as its tonal centre (with a I-V progression in the bass). The prominent trumpet line is based upon the three-note motif in Ex.77 and, like much of the writing in this section and elsewhere, is in thirds. Simpson is fond of presenting a diatonic chord in such a way that the fifth is not particularly prominent (and sometimes absent entirely) thereby weakening its sense of finality. In this case, the fifth, though present, appears only on the first trombone: **Ex.78.**

At Fig.94 there occurs a similar outburst but with the tonal centre a semitone higher in D^b. Two bars before that, the furious triplets on the strings provide the basis of much of the activity that is to follow - they are derived from the triplets heard at six bars after Fig.73 (see Ex.74).

In common with much of the movement, tonal centre is difficult to pin down in this passage. Most of the chords used are simply diatonic, perhaps with passing notes added - but they are juxtaposed at such speed as to make any attempt to find a fixed tonal centre impossible. For example, the seven bars before Fig.95 contain the following sustained chords (in order of appearance): C major, A major, E^b major, C# minor, B^b major, E major, D minor. This is excluding the grace note figures which themselves may imply a tonal centre: e.g. in the sixth bar before Fig.95 strings and woodwind imply B^b minor between a C major and an A major chord. It is clear that Simpson is using the resources of tonality here in a new and exciting way. The music is not in any particular key, but tonal relationships are not abandoned. If handled badly, this could sound clumsy; when handled with mastery, as it is here, the effect is exhilarating - the sensation of moving at great speed becomes almost tangible.

At Fig.95 the music settles on E^b as a tonal centre, strings and flutes continuing their furious triplets against fortissimo E^b's on trumpets, trombones, contrabassoon, basses

and timpani. These are of increasing frequency until a repeated pattern is established on timpani, contrabassoons and basses of ‖: 𝅗𝅥 7 2 𝅗𝅥 7 :‖ At this point the music moves into 3/4 and another development of Ex.60 is initiated on the trumpets, oboes and bassoons: **Ex.79.** In this form, fig.'z' is added to the continuing timpani ostinato to propel the music forward and Ex.79 is taken up imitatively by other groups of woodwind and brass. A temporary cessation of the ostinato at Fig.97 leads to a fragmented theme played 'ff' and 'molto secco' by unison woodwind and horns (against which a continuous stream of string triplets) which is based on an inversion of the opening three pitches of the movement. This leads, at the second bar of Fig.100 to a further series of ostinati - antiphonal exchanges between sections of the orchestra with the timpani taking a prominent role - which trace a series of rising tonal centres: C, D^b, D, E, F#, G#, B^b, C. This process, with constant alteration, is repeated three times until a massive C major chord with flattened 7th and the major third omitted is reached at Fig.105. This brings about a series of seven chords whose formation is dictated not by conventional tonal harmony but by the stepwise novement of the part-writing and in particular by the movement of the bass-line: **Ex.80.** Between the sixth and seventh chords the G and B are retained and the other two parts resolve chromatically downwards to create an unequivocal dominant 7th chord in C major.

It is at this point that, with a huge fortissimo crash, the tensions of this movement - both structural and tonal - discharge themselves. As the sustained dominant 7th dies away, staccato B^b's are softly heard on trombones and the bass-line moves to a sustained B^b over which a solo clarinet, in long notes, recalls the opening theme in its original version. The composer says "...the C tonality ...eventually wins, turning B^b into a mere Mixolydian 7th at the climax - as classical composers often turned to the subdominant near the end, so I have used the flat 7th ambiguously - is it tipping the music in the direction of F harmony that could be either the dominant of B^b or the subdominant of C, or is it in this case only a flat 7th? The latter, of course, but its old associations are not forgotten."[8].

The clarinet melody finishes on E and the bass line at last slips to the tonic C and a hushed E major chord on violins and violas fades out leaving only the low hum of the open C string of cellos and basses. From the score one can <u>see</u> the first violins moving up from G to B^b via A as they fade away. When one <u>listens</u>, it is not quite so obvious - one is uncertain as to whether it was imaginary or not - either way, there is a strong feeling that the whole mysterious process could begin again. Hugh Ottaway says that Simpson describes this ending in terms of "wonder", "awe" and "mystery". It is certainly a moving and deeply poetic conclusion to the symphony and a

satisfying end to the first phase of Simpson's development as a symphonist.

Notes

1. Ottaway, Hugh: Notes on Simpson No.3 issued with record UNS 225 (1970)
2. Letter to author.
3. Another striking example of such an approach is Tippett's use in the second movement of his Third Symphony of the famous dissonant passage beginning the finale of Beethoven's Ninth.
4. Note on Symphony No.3 (see note 1)
5. Letter to author.
6. See Musical Style, Section (iv).
7. Although such considerations may be irrelevant to many contemporary composers, they are, for Simpson, very real. Indeed he has pointed out an exactly similar situation in the opening phrase of the third movement of his Quartet No.10.
8. Letter to author.

SYMPHONY NO.4. (1970-2)

Eight years separate the completion of the Third Symphony from the commencement of the Fourth. By Simpson's standards, these years were relatively fallow from the point of view of composition. The main reasons for this were not only a demanding full-time job at the B.B.C., which inevitably relegated composition to a weekend activity, but also an increased concentration on the written word, most notably Simpson's book **The Essence of Bruckner**. Nevertheless, two substantial chamber works were composed during this period - a Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano (1967) and a Clarinet Quintet (1968) as well as the Piano Concerto (1967). An interesting feature of the Quintet is the 'reworking', at the beginning of the final section, of material from near the work's opening. This is a procedure which Simpson investigates further in the 4th and 5th Symphonies as well as the 8th Quartet.

The 4th Symphony was commissioned by the Halle orchestra and is dedicated 'to my friend, and fellow Beethovenian, James Loughran' who conducted the work's first performance. In a conversation with Ronald Stevenson broadcast immediately before the premiere of the 5th Symphony (which, incidentally, occurred just one week after that of the 4th) Simpson mentioned that he set about writing No.4 with great pleasure and even admitted that:

"I deliberately enjoyed writing it in a way which perhaps I hadn't quite permitted myself in other pieces."

It is certainly true that No.4 is a much more genial work than any of the first three symphonies - for example, the scherzo involves witty allusion to the music of other composers and the slow movement contains some of the most tenderly beautiful music Simpson has ever written. However, it would be a mistake to think that the technical approach is less rigorous or the musical utterance less forceful than in any of his other works.

In terms of the layout of the movements, the work is the only one of Simpson's symphonies to reflect the influence of Beethoven. It is in four movements with an enormous scherzo placed second (as in Beethoven's 9th). Tonally, the work also reflects classical models. The outer movements are essentially in E^b whilst the inner movements take E^b's dominant and subdominant as their respective tonal centres - which the composer has jokingly commented, "took an awful nerve..."

Calum M^{c}Donald has remarked upon the fact that whilst Simpson's reputation has gradually increased as a composer of tonal symphonies and quartets, his interest in organising tonality - at least in the way in which the first three symphonies are organised - has, paradoxically, diminished. This is not to say that he has stopped writing tonal music, but, certainly from the fifth symphony onwards, the concern with the

effects of large-scale tonal relationships is less clear. There is, for example, no point in trying to decide what key the fifth symphony is 'in'. It may be argued that this changing attitude towards tonality is apparent in the fourth symphony also - simply because the task which Simpson has set himself in this work necessitates a different approach towards both form and tonality.

In the discusson of the second movement of Symphony No.3 it was mentioned that, at times, tonality in that work is difficult to establish due to the rapidity with which it is changing. This is a result of thinking more specifically in terms of basic intervals and their generative power, and it is this interest which becomes an increasing feature of Simpson's later symphonies. In the fourth symphony it is the interval of the perfect fourth which generates much of the material - especially in the first movement.

This opening movement is perhaps the one most resistant to 'analysis' in Simpson's symphonic output. It has a peculiarly illusive quality which is perhaps the result of the way in which the unusually long melodic lines gradually unfold and develop - a process better heard than described - and also the relative lack of a strong sense of pulse. Indeed, the movement's course is utterly unpredictable from one bar to the next, with quicksilver changes of texture and thematic transformations as slippery as an eel - all of which sounds

like a recipe for total chaos. The fact that this movement is one of the most compelling and memorable in Simpson's output is a result of the close thematic working resulting in music that is truly 'organic' (i.e. not the result of obvious mechanical processes by which the material is artificially generated): everything in the movement sounds natural and spontaneous.

The opening figure is built out of fourths **Ex.81**: the second to the sixth notes of (a) making a kind of coiled chain of ascending fourths. Also, the interval between the first and last notes of (a) is a descending fourth confirming the basic tonality of E^b. This is immediately contradicted in the third bar by a chordal figure (a^1) which suggests the key of C major. Throughout the movement the two tonalities offset one another, their strongest contrast occurring in the final bars. The irregular accompaniment (a^2) in the third bar is characteristic of the movement and relates to what was said above about the relative lack of a regular pulse, lending the movement a certain unpredictability.

Example 81 quotes the opening of the symphony at some length in order to show the extraordinary bar-by-bar development of this movement. For example the violins, in bar 4, pick up their melody by combining elements of a^2 with a scale ascending through a fourth (a). This is immediately altered rhythmically in bar 5 to produce a figure which is then developed at bar 8 and is in turn the basis of the upper part

f bar 13. The soft cadential figure on woodwind and brass at 5-16 is related to a^1 and, obviously, (a) - (in the piling up of 4ths). Even the most seemingly casual, transitional material is of significance: the demisemiquaver scale of bar 12 and the minor 3rd at the beginning of 13 prove to be the starting point for the apparently contrasting material on violins at bars 24-25: **Ex.82.**

This violin melody also involves the dotted figure from bb.7, 11 and 14 of Ex,81 as well as a triplet semiquaver figure, introduced at bar 20, which, when combined with the ascending scale of bar 24 impells the music to its first fortissimo climax (b.32).

The bitonal context in which Ex.82 occurs is also germane to the symphony's opening. The striking combination of four horns and three piccolos implies A major whilst the violin melody suggests C minor. The two tonalities are a minor 3rd apart, as were the keys of E^b and C at the opening.

At the first main climax (b.32 - a dominant 7th in E^b, with, characteristically, the major 3rd missing) the opening melody returns on the strings. This is the first of three such overt references to the opening (the others are at bb. 68-9 and 105-6) and, on each reappearance, the key is the same (E^b). Such literalness is quite unusual for Simpson and demonstrates just how different his thinking is in this work. The first

restatement of the opening instigates further development and elaboration of this music, taking in the material which has been generated since then. **Ex.83** can be compared with bar 4 of Ex.81 and it will be immediately noticed that the passage has now been developed by the introduction of the triplet semiquavers noted in Ex.82.

By bars 45-6, two more important elements have been generated: a violin figure in 3rds (derived from the triplet semiquavers, the triplet quaver idea of bar 5 and the descending semitone with which the movement began) and a semiquaver scale, also in 3rds, on the woodwind: **Ex.84.**

Throughout the succeeding passage, the woodwind section maintains a constant semiquaver motion derived from Ex.84b, whilst the strings take up a strongly accented 'Scotch-snap' idea from the beginning of b.46 (Ex.84a). Against this, the brass play a series of soft cadences of the kind noted at the end of Ex.81 (i.e. complex chords built on superimposed 4ths resolving onto diatonic triads - in this case of B min., F maj., E min., A maj.-2nd inv.). Underneath all this activity is a series of pedal points - accented notes on lower strings, each sustained for five beats and rising in minor 3rds: A, C, E^{b}, G^{b} etc.. So a texture of considerable complexity is built up only to evaporate at bb.57-8 where the music hovers momentarily on a C# minor chord before a soft 9-note chord of superimposed 4ths glides onto a pure C major chord in first

inversion. This passage and the six bars which follow, quoted in Ex.85, are of considerable harmonic interest and are worth examining in detail as they provide a clear demonstration of the movement's overall harmonic concerns.

Most notable are the propensity of perfect 4ths, both in terms of harmonic and melodic structure, and the way in which they enable the music to move smoothly between diatonic chords which, in a conventional tonal language, would be unrelated. The use of harmonically superimposed 4ths has already been noted: in Ex.85 (bb.59-60) these chords are built up by connecting melodic strands which themselves move upwards through the interval of a 4th and whose final note is always sustained, thereby producing a chord. The melodic strands are themselves derivations of Ex.84b (with its characteristic repeated note) and the 7-note chord they created provides a transition between a C major chord (b.58, 2nd beat) and a B^{b} major chord (b.60, 4th beat). Another chord of 4ths is constructed in bb.61-2, this time using thematic material derived from both Ex.84b and bar 42 (see Ex.83). A further important aspect of this example concerns bb.62-4, where the chord of 4ths 'hockets' with a widely-spaced 8-note chord built out of two major chords of the flattened $7th^{1}$. and unusually scored for two flutes, piccolo, oboe, trumpet and three trombones. This type of chord was first noted in the 2nd movement of Symphony No.3 and, like the chord of 4ths, becomes a standard part of Simpson's harmonic language.

The implications of this interaction of radically differing chord types are realized in bar 72, where a chord of 4ths containing all twelve notes 'resolves', climactically, onto two combined chords of the flattened 7th, in E major (treble) and first inversion A major (bass). This is scored for tutti woodwind and brass, reinforced by timpani and side-drum playing a version of Ex.81a[2]. In fact, this is the first appearance of the side-drum in any of Simpson's symphonies; always sparing in his use of percussion, only the cymbals have been encountered until this point (towards the end of Symphony No.3). From this symphony onwards, both side-drum and cymbals are used quite frequently (in Symphonies 5, 6 and 8).

The first climax of the movement is followed by quiet development of the material heard so far, with Ex.84a proving to be particularly important, and this is joined at bar 88 by the commencement of a rather mysterious sequential chord progression, softly scored for heavy brass, timpani and pizzicato cellos and basses: **Ex.86.**

An interesting feature of this sequence (which chromatically ascends through a whole octave) is that, not only does it involve the interval of a 4th in its bass-line, but it also demonstrates in its harmony the relationship between 3rds- and 4ths-based chords, which is fundamental to this movement: the trombones play a series of chords in 4ths whilst the trumpets have a major triad moving onto a bare fifth.

A crescendo, combined with an increase in the speed of the last four repetitions of the sequence, leads to the second climax of the movement - a powerful B^b major chord, which functions as the dominant for the return of the opening melody in the original E^b major. The melody is now in quavers and, also, in imitation between violas/cellos and violins I/II at the distance of a semiquaver. It is at this point that a new sound is introduced to the Simpson orchestra: a suspended cymbal roll played with two metal beaters (this fairly unusual effect is usually produced with a pair of knitting needles!). The harsh sonority which this technique produces is very much in keeping with the kind of instrumental colours and spacing favoured by Simpson and he uses it again in Symphonies Nos.6 and 8.

There follows a fairly long quiet development of the opening material which can be traced in relation to Ex.80, taking in the rest of the material generated - particularly the triplet semiquaver figurations. Although a great deal of this section is simply in two-part counterpoint, the characteristic use of overlapping instrumental doublings in widely separated registers makes the music sound more contrapuntally dense than is actually the case (e.g. bb.133-150). Most of this development is quite delicately scored and it comes as a shock when, at bar 155, a sudden fortissimo fanfare on the brass results in a fierce response from the rest of the orchestra which, though short-lived, gives the music that follows a

greater sense of impatience - particularly apparent in the use of a greatly diminuted version of the opening in bb.164-7. The passage grows in intensity and weight of sound, though it is worth pointing out that Simpson is judicious in his use of the bass instruments (for example the double-basses are tacet between b.168 and b.186), thus ensuring the lightness of touch which was previously mentioned with regard to this movement.

When the third and final climax of the movement arrives at b.182, it is, once again, a chord combining two flattened 7th chords, this time of A^{b} major and D^{b} major. The chord is sustained for four bars with a diminuendo, before 'resolving' onto a soft and widely-spaced chord of the tonic E^{b} major. As fragments of earlier material softly flit through the woodwind, so the E^{b} major chord becomes distorted by the quiet introduction of alien notes. These take the form of perfect 4ths sustained by violas (E and A), violin II (A^{b} and D^{b}) and cellos ($C^{\#}$ and $F^{\#}$). In bb.194-5 these intervals are sustained, tremolando, whilst the 1st and 3rd horns play just the E^{b} and G of the original E^{b} major chord - nothing else happens in these bars. Then, quite without warning a fortissimo chord of C major, scored for tutti wind, double basses and suspended cymbal with metal sticks, is held for two beats before being 'cut off abruptly' (note in the score) to leave the other string instruments holding a ppp bare 5th of E^{b} and B^{b} - thus referring back to the E^{b}/C opposition at the beginning of the movement. So, in the space of three bars, the major harmonic

concerns of the movement are summarised: the use of superimposed 4ths (bb.194-5), their relationship with diatonic harmony (bb.195-6), the E^b/C tonal relationship (b.196). The only other important element missing is the chord of the flattened 7th, and this is implied in the final four bars of the movement where, against the E^b and B^b string chord, rhythms based on Ex.81a[2] are played on the note D^b by, alternately, trumpet I, clarinet I and oboe I.

The huge second movement is an astonishing 'Beethoven scherzo', lasting almost fifteen minutes and amounting to some 1,300 bars of music. It has an obsessive, driving energy which relates it immediately to the scherzo of Beethoven's 9th Symphony and indeed, as with the opening movement of Simpson's 3rd Symphony, he has modelled much of the movement upon what happens in the corresponding one by Beethoven. In the case of this scherzo, however, the analogies are much clearer - mainly because the structural design of a scherzo is rather simpler than that of a sonata-allegro, so it is easier to see what makes Beethoven's scherzo so remarkable and individual and to detect the ways in which Simpson pays tribute to the composer. Also, for the first part of the scherzo, (i.e. until the first double-bar) Simpson produces a virtual bar-by-bar analogy with Beethoven. It is, in fact, possible to listen to one whilst following the score of the other. However, Simpson only uses the Beethoven 'model' until the Trio, at which point things take a wholly unexpected turn.

Both Beethoven's and Simpson's scherzi have two large divisions, in the second of which the pulse moves from "in 1" to "in 3". Beethoven marks the beginning of this section "Ritmo di tre battute" (i.e. three-bar phrases); Simpson moves his equivalent from 3/4 to 3/2 (maintaining the same crotchet relationship). Both sections are marked with a repeat in the Beethoven. Nowadays, few performances observe both repeats - usually only the first section is repeated, which is even more illogical than not repeating either. Simpson also repeats both sections of his scherzo and in fact has the repeats fully written out in the score.[2]. Presumably this is a direct challenge to performers to omit them! So Simpson's scherzo could be said to have a didactic purpose in that it relates to an aspect of performance about which the composer feels very strongly.

After the opening 'ff' exchange between timpani and the rest of the orchestra, the music settles into a series of ostinati all based around the chord of B^b major, the main ideas of the scherzo being introduced in a fragmentary manner and gradually pieced together - in the same way that Beethoven gradually reveals the main theme of his scherzo, introducing it as a fugato and only giving it a definitive form at the first main climax: **Ex.87.**

As the first climax is reached at b.57, the B^b major tonality is suddenly undermined (a chord on the brass

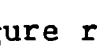
containing two chords of the flattened 7th on $F^{\#}$ and B - derived from the first movement) and the tonality veers wildly to C major for the first definitive statement of Ex.87b: **Ex.88.**

The theme is immediately repeated a semitone lower - this time approached by a similar brass chord, but a 4th lower in pitch - before returning to B^{b} major.

At this point, contrasting, more legato material is introduced, analogous to the passage from bar 77 in the Beethoven. At this point there occurred a gap of over four months in the work's composition. The break was the result of Simpson agreeing to write the test piece for the 1971 World Brass Band Championships and the resulting work 'Energy' (subtitled "Symphonic Study") contains material which also appears in this movement.

The contrasting material, as in the Beethoven, appears in long phrases on the woodwind with the strings continuing their rapid crotchet figurations in the background and it similarly results in another ff tutti (bb.93-109). Tonally this passage moves between C major, E^{b} major and C major again - this, of course, relates to the tonal concerns of the first movement.

The return of Ex.88 in C major (b.109) and the resulting exchange with the legato material of bar 77 relates to a similar passage in the Beethoven, but whereas initially

Beethoven puts the contrasting material in the strings, Simpson gives the music to muted horns. The final bars of the first section break the material down again in preparation for the repeat and, at this point, Simpson introduces a tiny figure whose characteristic hocketting between instruments relates it to the very opening of the movement in much the same way that Beethoven's  figure relates to the beginning and the end of the first section of his Scherzo: **Ex.89.**

The first section is then repeated - though, characteristically, Simpson writes out the repeat in full in his score! It is at the beginning of the Scherzo's second main section (b.281 in Simpson's score) that the significance of Ex.89 begins to be felt. By undermining the one-in-a-bar pulse which has so far been an important feature of the music, Ex.89 succeeds in providing a natural transition to the change of tempo at 309. The new 3/2 tempo (with the crotchet unit remaining unchanged in speed) relates to the "Ritmo di tre battute" which Beethoven indicates at b.177 of his score. At this point the relationship between the two works begins to diverge somewhat - Beethoven's unit of three beats constitutes nine crotchets (i.e. a compound time), Simpson's is only six. Nevertheless, the two composers similarly derive their material from the opening of their Scherzi: **Ex.90.**

The passage from b.311 to b.332 moves through a series of quite well-defined tonal areas - C, A^b and E^b until a series of

soft contrary motion chords of the flattened 7th between a) piccolo, two flutes and oboe (high) and b) three horns and tuba (low) lead the music back into the original 3/4 metre (b.340-45). A section of delicate contrapuntal development of Ex.87a and b is accompanied by pizzicato basses and contrabassoon playing on the last beat of each bar (b.349-356) and this culminates in an explosive restatement in the original B^b major of Ex.88, now in its most complete form and combining Ex.87a and b in the melody (bb.367-399; c.f. Beethoven 264-296).

This long tutti (the same duration as the Beethoven) also reverts to the contrasting material heard from b.77 (see from b.399) and, from b.433, returns to the same music as bb.93-142 but transposed down a fifth and with some changes in the scoring. This brings the second part of the Scherzo to a conclusion, although its 201 bars are to be repeated.

At this point the Beethoven model is abandoned and, as Simpson said of the relationship of the second movement of No.3 to its first movement, he now "lets fly". The tempo of this Trio is still 3/4 but with crotchet now equal to a whole bar of the previous tempo. The constant quaver accompaniment, however, serves to make the relationship between the tempi unclear to the ear.

The Trio is the only passage in a Simpson symphony to actually quote the work of another composer[3]. and it is a

section from the first movement of Haydn's Symphony No.76 which provides the basis for this Trio: **Ex.91.**

Structurally, the passage is very simple: the two fragments quoted form the basis of the four tonal phrases (bb. 715-720; 727-731; 740-746; 751-763) which are always played 'dolce' and pp with delicate woodwind accompaniment. In between these passages come 'interruptions' using a far more strident harmonic language. The first 'interruption' provides a characteristic example: **Ex.92.**

These passages are scored in a variety of ways, often using extremes of register simultaneously, sometimes using muted brass instruments, always abrasive in effect - emphasised by their juxtaposition with the Haydn quote. The whole thing (that is to say four 'Haydn' phrases and four interruptions) is repeated three times broadly tracing a crescendo - though the the 'Haydn' phrases always remain pp. The last repetition of the passage is the most violent with the Haydn tune having to withstand four ferocious assaults from the full orchestra (with prominent percussion). Always the melody carries on, blithely unaware of the increasingly petulant attempts to dislodge it.

Of course, the effect is truly Haydnesque and reflects the good honest vulgarity which is as much a part of Haydn's character as it is of Simpson's (see slow movement of Haydn's Symphony No.93 which contains a wonderfully flatulent bassoon

solo). The reason that such a passage works brilliantly well in this symphony but would probably sound embarrassingly naive in the hands of many other composers, is that Simpson has, as has been demonstrated, succeeded to quite an unusual extent in absorbing the essential elements of a classical style into his own, highly individual, musical language. What impresses the listener here is the skill and wit with which the two styles refract each other. The question of 'parody' never even occurs - Simpson is too strong a composer to ever suggest that.

The final tutti interruption to the 'Haydn' music is of ferocious violence (bb.874-881) and it leads into the 'recapitulation' of the Scherzo. This is a far from literal restatement, indeed it constitutes an elaborate development of the Scherzo with the Beethoven model now completely abandoned. The opening tutti is repeated at the original pitch but, after that, the music goes in a different direction, initially reworking material from Ex.87. An important new element is the introduction of a rising arpeggiated figure which is syncopated in such a way as to increase the rhythmic excitement: **Ex.93a.**

This figure is then combined with Ex.87b to produce a characteristic descending/ascending idea mainly in 3rds: **Ex.93b.** This culminates in a fierce, but shortlived, tutti (952-970) in which striking use is made of 'sffp' accents in the bass, always attacking the note on the second crotchet of the bar and sustaining it, with a diminuendo, through the next.

After this brief outburst, the figures quoted in Ex.93 are developed further, with the relationship between Ex.93b and Ex.87b being made clear from b.994 onwards. Here the woodwind play a rhythmic augmentation of the last five notes of Ex.87b in a series of imitative entries, each a tone higher than the last, with the final (tonic) note of each entry sustained. Thus a chord is produced consisting of the notes B, D^{b}, E^{b} and F. This process is immediately repeated in the strings but with the entries now a fifth below each other: B, E, A, D (this necessitates the slight reshaping of the contour of the last five notes of Ex.87b: the minor 3rd between the first two notes becomes a minor 2nd). This tendency to build up a complex and often widely spaced chord from a series of imitative entries is highly characteristic of Simpson's music and was noted in the 3rd Symphony as well as the first movement of this one. It occurs again at bb.1026-1032 where, against Ex.87b on woodwind, the strings build up a chord, starting with the A above middle C and adding E, G and $C^{\#}$ above it , then B^{b}, E and F below. This leads directly to a second fortissimo outburst, similar to that at b.952 (bb.1035-1067), which is abruptly halted by a cymbal clash directed to ring on into the contrasting pianissimo section which follows. In this section, the rising scalic figure, Ex.87a, forms the basis of an ostinato, in the tonic B^{b}, involving the violas and 1st violins playing Ex.87a in imitation over an accompaniment in the other strings. Against this, the woodwind build up another chord of six pitches, built from a rising chain of alternately major and

minor thirds: C, E^b, G, B^b, D, F. The passage is then reversed, with woodwind playing the ostinato (now a tone higher) whilst the strings build up the chord starting with D and F - the two notes which completed the woodwind chord. To balance these rising chord formations, a descending one is introduced at bb.1085-1093 and this leads to another fortissimo passage, centred around B^b, in which Ex.87a proves to be a powerful generative force (bb.1097-1118).

With a sudden drop to pianissimo (at 1130), the movement begins its final span. A high B is sustained on the 1st violins and later taken over by 2nd violins and by piccolo - the whole passage constituting a pedal point of some sixty-one bars. Against this, deep down in the basses and cellos, Ex.87b appears in C major and, from time to time, a quiet timpani roll adds to the sense of expectancy which has suddenly pervaded the music. Additionally, a side-drum begins to punctuate the texture every three bars with a tiny rhythmic cell which is in fact derived from Ex.87a. At b.1192, the pedal point switches to B^b, which acts as the dominant of E^b in which the strings play Ex.87a. At b.1211, the tonality again drops by a semitone but, at bb.1218-19 it veers suddenly to A^b and, to the accompaniment of an increasingly urgent side-drum tatoo, the oboes, clarinets and bassoons play new material which sounds like a quote (perhaps from Beethoven) but which the author has been unable to trace: **Ex.94.**

As the excitement and the dynamics begin to mount, Ex.94 reappears on high strings and woodwind (bb.1261-1272), now in B major, but is swallowed up in the frenetic activity of the constant crotchet accompaniment to Ex.94's hemiola rhythm. The tensions generated by this enormous and hugely energetic movement finally explode in the last thirty bars and with reference to the offbeat fortissimo attacks, first heard at b.952 combined with a powerful descending sequence of fourths (bb.1313-1318), the movement hurtles to its B^b major conclusion. In performance the cumilative effect of this massive discharge of energy can, quite literally, be breathtaking. This scherzo is the first example in Simpson's symphonies of a particular kind of furious moto perpetuo writing of a kind almost never achieved since Beethoven. (Virtually the only other twentieth century composer to have achieved this kind of energy is Karl Amadeus Hartmann.) The sheer physical exhilaration of this music defies mere words, but it is to become a vital element in Simpson's later symphonies - particularly the next one.

The slow movement presents something of a problem in the context of Simpson's symphonic output. It is, of course, not unknown for a composer to radically revise a work subsequent to its premiere - for example, what we now know as the first movement of Sibelius' 5th Symphony began life as two separate movements - at the time of writing, however, it is the original version of Simpson's slow movement which is better known to the

public. The problem is compounded by the fact that the original slow movement is regarded by many listeners as one of Simpson's finest achievements - probably due to its melodiousness and high degree of consonance. Indeed, the original slow movement did sound, at times, like a possible adagio for Beethoven's projected 10th Symphony and it is, perhaps, because of the movement's occasionally dangerous proximity to pastiche that the composer decided on a fairly thorough revision. The most radical parts of the revision affect the opening solo cello melody and a later variation on that melody. In the revision the opening melody remains, but its contours have been sharpened and the harmonic accompaniment has been toughened.[4]. The later variation, which had the opening melody played slowly on the woodwind and combined with quietly following sequential writing for the violins, has been entirely removed and replaced by the far more angular material heard between (bb.70-110).

This kind of determination to toughen the fibre of a movement which had hitherto revealed a completely different aspect of the composer's creative personality is most unusual - it is difficult to think of a comparable example. One is not dealing here with the suppression of uncharacteristic music from the composer's youth, but that of a mature symphonist. Perhaps the composer felt that the music was, for him, over-sentimental (he would consider this to be a great weakness). Perhaps he decided that the music simply was not good enough and that he had failed to achieve what he set out to do. Most

likely, the truth lies somewhere in between and one would do well to heed Calum M^{c}Donald's words on the subject:

> "Much as I regret the demise of that deeply expressive Adagio, he was clearly within his compositional rights in suppressing what he felt to be sub-standard work and it was none of our affair to protest."[5].

Nevertheless, the 'new' slow movement still contains music of great beauty. The opening rising scale is to provide the basis of the cello melody, and the chord which follows again combines two chords of the flattened 7th: **Ex.95.**

The melody for solo cello unfolds over some twenty-six extremely slow bars and the two descending fifths separated by a rising 4th in its fourth bar clearly relates it to Ex.81a (the opening of the symphony): **Ex.96.** Tonally the music is adventurous and the delicacy of the slow moving accompaniment belies its considerable harmonic ambiguity. However, A^{b} major is the point of reference to which the melody returns for the opening of the second of its two paragraphs (bb.22-3) and A^{b} minor is the key in which it winds down (b.28) in a chain of descending 4ths (again relating to the Symphony's opening) which is to prove significant later on.

The inspiration behind this movement is, fairly obviously, the slow movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, and this is particularly apparent when, at bar 32, Simpson moves

from the rapt contemplation of the opening Adagio into a flowing Andante in 6/8 (𝅗𝅥. = 𝅗𝅥.), which is how Beethoven introduces the second theme of his double-variation structure. Another feature shared by the two works is the striking key change at this point. Beethoven moves up a major 3rd, from B^b to D; Simpson moves from A^b to D - a tritone - and he does so by combining three chords of the flattened 7th on C (cellos, tuba and basses), E (heavy brass and clarinets) and G (flutes, oboe and high strings). The move from this dense chord to a pure D major triad, and a new melody for the solo horn, is intensely beautiful and is retained from the movement's original version: **Ex:97.**

Again, a long melody unfolds (bb.32-50), this time in a more contrapuntal texture and with greater instrumental variety and is repeated enriched and varied from bb.52 to 68. The passage comes to rest on a soft chord which again combines two chords of the flattened 7th, this time on D^b and B^b and it is at this point that the second major revision begins.

The formerly euphonious A^b major variation on the opening melody is replaced by a hushed, mysterious and tonally elusive string passage of interlocking four-part counterpoint. The effect is much less reassuring than that of the previous version and lends the movement a curiously dreamlike, even hallucinatory, quality which it did not possess before.

As the passage progresses the lines are doubled by single woodwind instruments, though, characteristically, they tend to be doubled at two octaves distance - treble lines doubled in the bass and vice versa. The polyphony is interrupted at two points by quiet interjections on the brass, the first (bb.83-85) recalling the cello melody at b.13-14 (see Ex.96) and the second (bb.93-97) briefly touching on the tonal centre of G.

The fortissimo climax of the movement (b.111) proved to be something of a problem in the original version. It appeared abruptly and was apt to disturb the lyricism of the movement as a whole due to its lack of inevitability. The new version somewhat improves matters: the descending 4ths in the brass relate to bb.27-8 of the cello melody, but the effect is not one of a clinching climax to the movement in the manner of a later Bruckner symphony. Neither does it relate to the 'climax' of the slow movement of Beethoven's Ninth (bb.131-3) where the dominant function of the fanfare-like figures creates a sense of 'arrival' so that the astonishing move to D^{b} major gives the impression of an entirely new tonal vista opening up. Trapped in the dilemma of seeming unnecessarily forceful yet lacking inevitability, the climax of this movement requires careful handling in performance if it is not to appear strained.

In compensation, the coda of the movement is profoundly poetic. The music returns to the opening tempo and is combined

with the first six notes of the second theme (see Ex.97) played first on solo oboe, then solo horn and, finally, two clarinets. With each change of instrumentation there is a cadence into a key successively a major third lower, so that the sequence of keys is D major, B♭ major, F♯ major. The cadences in the last two keys each result in a soft, widespread chord on the strings and a deep sense of peace pervades the music. At the end, the G♯ minor scale from the opening (Ex.95) returns but, this time, when the F natural of the third bar is reached, a chord of descending fourths is gradually formed on the strings - each section sustaining one note - so that a chord of (reading downwards) F, C, G, D, A results.

This chord is sustained for the first four bars of the Allegro vivace finale, which follows 'attacca', before the mood changes and a lively, but graceful, variant of the 1st movement's opening melody is introduced: **Ex.98.**

For the first four hundred bars or so, this movement is a free variation on the first movement. It is a device which Simpson is fond of employing and it says much about his approach to composition that he enjoys reworking his own material and finding new paths over the same ground. It is the mark of a truly 'developmental' composer and of a master of variation technique (c.f. 'Variations on a theme of Nielsen' and the 9th Quartet). It is also a natural step from reworking

Beethovenian models in Symphony No.3, movement 1 and Symphony No.4, movement 2 to reworking one's own compositional blueprints. The pleasure for the listener lies in the identification of recognisable signposts along the way and in the constant discovery, on repeated hearings, of new details - rather in the way that a favourite walk, though always recognisably the same route, will always reveal new features which one did not previously notice.

It is unnecessarily tedious to slavishly account for every single correspondence between the movements - especially as the progression of large-scale tonality remains similar - instead, a list of the more important analogies follows and in **Ex.98**, excerpts are given which relate to the substantial example of the opening (Ex.81) in order to demonstrate the nature of the variants which Simpson derives.

Movement IV	Movement I	
b.41 Cadence from super-imposed 4ths onto D^b major triad	bb.15-16	
bb.50-2 (Vlns,Fl,Cl)	bb.19-20 (Vln I)	
bb.67-75 (Str)	bb.24-27 (Vlns)	(see Ex.82)
bb.91-3 (Str & Ww)	bb.32-4 (Str)	
bb.133-5 (Str & Ww)	bb.45-6 (Vln)	(see Ex.84)
bb.153-4 (Str & Ww)	b.52 (Vln)	
bb.164-8 (Hrns)	bb.58-9 (Hrns)	(see Ex.85)
bb.188-90 Alternating chord of 4ths, chord of 2 flattened 7ths	bb.63-4	(see Ex.85)
b.208	b.72	
bb.244-8 (Vln)	bb.83-4 (Vln & Picc)	
b.299	b.105	
bb.318-41	bb.105-114	
bb.349-54 (Brass)	bb.117-8 (Hrns & Trbs)	
b.360 (Cl)	b.120 (Cl)	
bb.389-97 (Str) (see Ex.99)	bb.134-6 (Str)	
bb.474-6 (Brass)	bb.155-6 (Brass)	

An important new element generated at the opening of the movement and absorbed into the music is a repeated three-note descending scale in quaver triplets (Ex.98x), which becomes

an increasingly important factor in developing the momentum of the finale and it is frequently used in imitation, as at bb.389-90: **Ex.99.**

The figure marked (a) - an accented third beat clash resolving onto the first beat of the next bar - generates much of the next one hundred and thirty bars of development and it is used along with Ex.98x to steer the music towards a climactic moment (bb.523-529) where the combination of two chords of the flattened 7th relates to a similar moment at b.182 in the first movement. Here, however, the chords are a semitone higher and it is from this point that the finale develops independently.

At first a graceful, rather Beethovenian melody emerges in B major: **Ex.100.** Although apparently new material, the melody's opening has, in fact, grown out of Ex.99a and, as the melody becomes chromatically distorted (bb.586-7), Ex.99a becomes an increasingly forceful element, eventually combining with Ex.98x, on strings and flutes to drive the music into a second climax out of which emerges - to the listener's considerable surprise - a lively march!

The march, in alla breve time, retains the same crotchet value as the previous tempo and is quite brief (only thirty four bars). It nevertheless builds up a formidable amount of power with its constant descending chromatic sequences over a

tonic/dominant D major bass line and, at length the music moves into 3/2 for an explosive fff coda.

Against furiously rushing string and woodwind figurations, derived from Ex.98x, the brass play what begins as a chorale - quite firmly in E^b major - though they soon join the rest of the orchestra, complete with wild cymbal clashes and an energetic side-drum tatoo. The music then moves back through the previous tempi: 2/2 (b.681) and 3/4 (b.687) and it is essential throughout this entire section that the metrical relationships must be strictly observed. There must be no slowing down if bombast is to be avoided. The final bars of the symphony are an explosion of rhythmic energy and are based upon the very same series of interlocking fourths with which the work began: **Ex.101.**

The very extravagance of this coda lies in the fact that Simpson has set himself the task of writing a Beethovenian symphony. It is fitting therefore that the work should end in such a way. It is also fascinating to recall that the period of this work's composition (1970-2) is precisely the same time during which Tippett (a composer whose earlier music Simpson much admires) was writing his 'Beethoven symphony', No.3 - and reaching very different musical conclusions. Neither composer has ever believed in easy solutions but a significant indication of their difference in temperament was revealed when Simpson remarked to the author that "when I

hear the quote from Beethoven's Ninth in Tippett's Third I always wish it would just carry on!"

The geniality of Simpson's 4th belies a formidable musical strength apparent in every one of his works. If the work does not always succeed in synthesizing its various elements to maximum effect it will, nevertheless, always be regarded with particular affection by admirers of his music - though the contrast between this work and the overwhelming force of the next symphony almost defies belief.

Notes

1. 'Chord of the flattened 7th' will be used henceforth to signify what is commonly called a dominant 7th. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly, it is obviously inaccurate to call such chords dominant 7ths in a tonal context where their dominant function is not apparent and, secondly, it prevents confusion over which chord one is actually talking about - e.g. a "dominant 7th in A major" would comprise the notes E, $G^{\#}$, B, D, whilst a "dominant 7th on A major" would be A, $C^{\#}$, E, G.

2. The manuscript does not carry the written out repeat of the long second section - it is simply indicated by the conventional double bar da capo. However, the superbly calligraphed Longnick hire library copy has both repeats written in full. See also Quartet No.5 whose first movement relates similarly to that of Beethoven Op.59 No.2.

3. The Bruckner 'quote' in the 9th Symphony is an entirely different matter and is discussed elsewhere.

4. Since this chapter was written, Simpson has further revised this melody, introducing a number of rests in the place of complete phrases. These are incorporated into Ex.96.

5. Radio talk by Callum MacDonald.

SYMPHONY NO.5 (1972)

When dealing with this symphony, superlatives are difficult to avoid. At its premiere in May 1973 - given by the work's dedicatees, the London Symphony Orchestra, under Andrew Davis - the reaction was uniformly and overwhelmingly enthusiastic, from the audience and press alike. (Even the orchestra gave the composer a standing ovation.) Although the work had to wait eleven years for its next British performance, the event was greeted with similarly jubilant scenes typified by Robert Henderson's Daily Telegraph review: "If masterpiece is a descriptive term... that ought to be reserved for the rarest of occasions, it seems the only word that could possibly do justice to the 5th Symphony". Faced with such panegyric, one may well wonder what it is that sets this symphony apart from Simpson's others and makes it so sensationally powerful.

The answer, as with all truly great music, lies in the relationship between emotional content and the carrying power of its external organisation. To take the first point, the work has a dark emotional force unique in Simpson's output and it takes on a variety of guises ranging from eerie calm at the opening and in the second and fourth sections, to passages of explosive violence unleashed and sustained across unusually long musical paragraphs. As for the outward forms which sustain and control this inner turbulence, they are of unusual strength

because it is precisely this relationship which provides the Symphony's point of departure.

The orchestra used is a large one: triple woodwind (with all three flutes doubling piccolo), four horns, four trumpets (two in D, two in B^b), four trombones (two tenor, two bass), two tubas, side drum, cymbals, strings and two sets of timpani placed, menacingly, on opposite sides of the platform. Frequently, this large orchestra is exploited for its sheer decibel level, but it will also be noticed that Simpson is concerned with extending the compass of the orchestra on either side - hence the three piccolos and the unusually weighty bass (contrabassoon, two bass trombones and two tubas).

Simpson has spoken of a 'psychological programme' to this symphony: "When you're disturbed... there's always a part of your mind which is completely still, completely unaffected by what happens, absolutely quiet, detached, objective. You watch yourself... And that's really what this symphony's about."[1]. The musical analogy by which this idea is expressed is strikingly simple: a soft chord sustained at the opening of the symphony reappears at crucial moments and at the end of the work, giving the impression that it has underpinned the entire symphony.

The form which results from this idea makes the work, in many ways, the easiest of Simpson's symphonies to describe

verbally. The work is in one movement, lasting about thirty-seven minutes, and it divides into five sections. The outer ones are energetic allegros, whilst as the centre of the work is a brief 'Scherzino' - a tiny aggressive movement cast as a 'patrol' (i.e. a gradual crescendo/diminuendo) over a strict rhythmic ostinato. On either side of the Scherzino are slow sections, both canonic, with the voices in the first canon entering at successively lower pitches whilst, in the second, the entries begin from the bass and work upwards. The resulting form - Allegro I; 'Canone I', 'Scherzino', 'Canone II', Allegro II - is broadly symmetrical.

From this description, it will be readily understood that the attitude towards formal organisation in the 5th Symphony is radically different from that of the previous ones. The approach towards tonality is also something of a departure for Simpson. As was mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, it is wrong to talk about this symphony being 'in' a certain key - the drama basic to this symphony is not that of the large-scale opposition of clearly defined tonal centres, as in the first three symphonies, nor is it a 'commentary' on Classical procedures as encountered in the 4th. Instead, the outcome and implications of the 5th remain mysterious and it is in this context that Simpson's handling of tonal ambiguity reaches new heights of mastery.

The opening chord is itself a fine example of such ambiguity: **Ex.102.** Certainly, the chord could not be seen as 'tonal', yet it does have an oddly consonant quality resulting from a preponderance of major tenths. Despite the static nature of the chord (it is sustained for thirty-five bars at the opening), a sense of great tension prevails. This results from both the wide spacing of the chord, which lends a feeling of great distance and vastness, and from the chord's tonal ambiguity - it contains within itself implications of C major, D major, A^b major and, possibly, E major and these potential tonalities are pointed out in the opening bars by the discreet highlighting of individual pitches by solo woodwind, horns and timpani.

The tempo is already fast (Allegro $\mathit{d.}$ = 60) but no sense of pulse is present at this stage and the music remains utterly static until, without warning, and with maximum power the entire orchestra breaks in, 'fff' (**Ex.103**) and the listener is engulfed by a whirlwind of activity in which the most important material of the symphony is presented at great speed. Four crucially important ideas are heard in the first four bars of tutti (bb.36-39) and they are: 1) a rising scale on the trombones (a^1); 2) a complementary descending scale on tubas and basses (a^2); 3) a repeated descending four-note scale played in semiquavers on strings and woodwind - actually, a transposed inversion of the first four notes of a^1 - (a^3); and

4) a figure made up of a descending semitone, a descending major third and four repeated notes (b).

Bars 40-42 of Ex.103 demonstrate in embryo the closely argued development which immediately ensues, with a^3 combining with a semiquaver derivation of a^1 to produce a rushing descending/ascending scale on the strings which culminates in a semitonal shake (x). Around this activity is a series of canonic entries based on the first three chromatically descending notes of a^2.

The fiercely energetic development of this material over the next forty bars includes two more important elements. Firstly, the aggressive dotted rhythm at bb.51-2 (**Ex.104**) involves the chromatic descent of a series of eight-note chords - in fact, a pair of diminished 7th chords. Secondly, the entire passage culminates in a climactic descending figure whose prominent minor thirds result from the predominance of minor thirds in the eight-note chords previously mentioned: **Ex.105.**

At bar 83, the frenetic activity is halted by a sudden drop in dynamic and a change of texture. The horn figure at this point, a major second resolving onto a major third, is to prove important. In fact, the idea is a foreshortened version of Ex.103 a^1 and a^2: **Ex.106.**

The sudden drop to pianissimo at b.83 and the relatively long oboe solo which dominates from bb.88-108 gives the impression of providing the equivalent of a second subject in a Classical sonata structure. However, its function proves to be different and, besides, the material is so intimately connected with Ex.103 that any reference to this passage in terms of subsidiary material would be misleading: **Ex.107.**

Attention was drawn to the use of two combined chords of the diminished 7th at bb.51-2 (Ex.104). Due to the fact that this chord is made up solely of superimposed minor thirds, the combination of three such chords, with roots successively a semitone apart, results in all twelve notes of the chromatic scale being used. In the Third Symphony the limited use of various twelve-note chords was observed. Now, at bb.109-112, this more organised harmonic distribution of the twelve notes appears: **Ex.108.**

The dangers of using such dense harmonic material, in a musical language strongly dependent on harmonic clarity, need hardly be pointed out. Simpson, however, uses such devices judiciously and generally employs formations of such chords which are not only widely spaced but also derive from the natural phenomena resulting from certain intervallic relationships (e.g. the example just given, or the use of superimposed perfect fifths or fourths). The result is that the harmony is meaningful and not simply the arbitrary placing of

some tone-cluster - a device which, to Simpson, would be anathema.

This passage of relative relaxation is short-lived and, with the reappearance of Ex.105 at b.112, the music once again becomes turbulent, with 'x' (see Ex.103) acting as a fiercely disruptive element and spreading through the entire compass of the orchestra (including some extraordinary subterranean rumblings for the two tubas). Ex.108 also reappears (b.114-118) this time featuring the weird (and highly characteristic) sonority of three piccolos and two tubas. One important aspect of Ex.108, apart from the harmonic structure, was the way in which three of the voices 'resolved' chromatically downwards one crotchet beat ahead of the other voices. The result, a series of false cadences, actually derives from Ex.106 and it generates a new idea, first heard on high woodwind and strings at b.122: **Ex.109.**

This idea is to be heard as a continuous chain of descending figurations between b.122 and b.134 and, again, at bb.149-151 following a passage built entirely out of ff/pp alternations of fig.x. From b.154, Ex.109 forms the basis of the contrary motion accompaniment to the sweeping melody on the horns. When, at b.168, the trumpets take over this melody, the accompaniment changes to a derivation of 'x', whilst still maintaining its contrary motion characteristic.

This passage builds to a powerful climax and a restatement, in C minor, of Ex.105. As with the first appearance of this idea, it is followed by an immediate drop in dynamic level and a brief moment of respite involving imitative development of Ex.103 a^1 and a^2 on violins, clarinets and bassoons (bb.189-193), coming to rest on the repeated notes of Ex.103b.

The three fortissimo interruptions on the notes B (b.197), B^b (b.200), and A (b.202) prepare the way for an intensive developmental section in which many of the elements so far generated are combined in what Simpson, quoting Elgar, has described as "a devil of a fugue". It is apparent how organically the fugue subject is derived from the basic material: **Ex.110.**

The exposition of the fugue is in four voices and strictly canonic. The entries descend in pitch through the string section, starting, successively, on C, D, G and A. At 228, a short episode based on the sixth bar of the subject leads to its return beginning on Db and then on E. The latter entry, scored for woodwind (b.239) is preceded by a sharply accented chord on the brass, which is another eight-note aggregate of two combined diminished 7th chords. The entry of the subject on G, at b.244, (scored for strings without double-basses) only gets as far as its fifth bar, where it continues to repeat 'a^3' as an acompaniment to another figure derived from Ex.109

(itself based on Ex.106) which utilises contrary motion once again (bb.256-265). The sequential nature of the writing, as well as the lack of any new thematic content, lends this passage a sense of relative relaxation before a group of 'quasi-stretto' entries on the brass, punctuated by two enormous eight-note chords for the full orchestra, lead to an explosive restatement of Ex.103 (b.279). A powerful sense of recapitulation is, of course, unavoidable and bb.279-334 are a very clear altered recapitulation of bb.36-80, with some phrases expanded and repeated.

Tonally, the recapitulation is interesting because it begins a tritone away from the original (i.e. as far away as possible), by b.292, it is a minor third lower and , by the repeat of Ex.105 at b.332, a minor second lower. At this point, one might expect a return of the second group from b.83. Instead Ex.105 is repeated, more urgently, a fifth higher (b.336), then, with maximum intensity, a major second higher still. Suddenly, the violent activity ceases (b.349) and all that remains is the soft chord from the symphony's opening - totally unchanged by the events which have surrounded it. Three bars later the rest of the orchestra attempts to dislodge the chord by exactly the same means as at b.36, but this time the attempt fails. There follow two more fortissimo assaults (bb.359-361, bb.366-367) but they gradually decrease in power and duration. The antiphonal timpani hammer out a tritone, D and A^b, and also recede into the background. All that remains

is the soft chord - as cold and implacable as ever, to conclude the first section.

The first of the work's two canons begins on the piccolo which takes over the top note (c) of the string chord, at which point the upper division of the 1st violins stops playing. The subject itself shares certain thematic characteristics with material already heard: **Ex.111**, and is dominated by the interval of a minor third which figured so prominently in Ex.105. It is constructed in four long phrases, each of which is separated from the next by a few beats' rest. During these rests, the violins who have just stopped playing re-enter with a quiet demisemiquaver trill on the high C and B whilst the double basses softly accent their bottom C in syncopation.

The next entry of the canonic subject, at b.406, is scored for solo clarinet. It starts on A^b - the next note of the sustained string chord, reading downwards. Again, the division of violins holding this note stops playing with the clarinet's entry, but it combines with the first division of violins during the gaps between phrases, so that a trill in major tenths results.

In this manner the canon proceeds - each entry appearing on the next note of the string chord reading downwards. So the chord gradually disintigrates into the gentle polyphony of the canonic interplay, with oboe entering on F#, bassoon on D, bass

clarinet on E (discreetly highlighted by pizzicato notes on the upper division of cellos) and the final entry, again on C, scored for cellos, basses and 2nd oboe.

After the subject, the rest of the canonic theme is largely derived from fragments of the subject and the canonic imitation is strict until the entry of the sixth and last voice (b.499), where the relationship of the voices changes so that it remains a basically five-part texture. At this point, Simpson introduces his highly characteristic technique of doubling voices at a distance of several octaves, creating a polyphonic texture at once dense and yet clearly defined.

The whole of this canon is marked pianissimo and is remarkable for the way in which it gradually moves from complete stasis to teeming activity, without any change in dynamic level. In this respect it comes close to the world of the second movement of his Third Symphony - and, in view of that movement's avowed programme, it is inevitable that one should hear this music as a kind of dawn chorus. It can, perhaps, be thought of in terms of the cool detachment of the natural world, as distinct from the turbulent world of human emotions in the first section.

As the canon comes to rest, with all the strings playing the end of the theme in widely spaced octaves (a passage curiously reminiscent of Vaughan-Williams - in sonority, if not

substance) the third section nervously springs to life. 'Scherzino' is a slightly misleading title for this section, in that it refers to a relative brevity (it lasts just over three minutes) which belies its formidable power. The menacing quality of the music is the result of two elements. Firstly, the structure has a certain inevitability in that it is simply a gradual crescendo and diminuendo. Secondly, the section is unique in Simpson's music for being constructed over a completely unyielding rhythmic ostinato: **Ex.112a.**

This side-drum pattern, which dominates much of the section, gives rise to a melodic idea in two voices: **Ex.112b** (from bar 535). With its overlapping voices resulting in the same relationship of major second/minor thirds already apparent in Ex.109, the figure will be seen to be intimately linked to material from earlier in the Symphony. These two figures dominate the section. However, variety is provided by constant variation of the pitch at which Ex.112b is presented - thus a sense of harmonic movement is created. Also, in addition to the constantly varied scoring of Ex.112b, a certain amount of new material is generated - in particular, a descending figure which eventually dominates the climax of the movement: **Ex.112c.**

As the dynamic level increases, so the orchestration becomes fuller and more powerful, until, just over half way through, the hitherto increasingly volatile atmosphere explodes into a passage of ferocious violence (bb.640-672). It is

perhaps paradoxical that such a vehement outburst should prove to be one of the most tonally stable passages in the Symphony, but this is actually the case - throughout the whole passage the brass in particular blare out Ex.112a on repeated B^{b}s until, at b.673, a piece of harmonic sleight of hand slips the tonality towards C at the same moment that the violent climax begins to abate. After this, the music begins to subside, though Ex.112 continues to march relentlessly through the texture. From b.721 the side-drum rhythm starts to disintegrate and, for the last twenty bars of the section, although the tempo never slackens, the phrases become less and less purposeful and one becomes aware that this fierce section has failed to disrupt the progress of the Symphony. At bb.737-9, the cellos play an apparently inconsequential ascending/descending scale which is repeated (and slightly varied) at b.742-5 before the music sinks to a sustained low C over a gradual diminuendo to pianissimo.

The second canon, as well as being in the same tempo, is structurally complementary to the first. Whereas the first started on the high C of the pivotal chord and gradually dismantled Ex.102 with each entry, so this section, starting from the bottom C and with each entry higher than the last, gradually builds up Ex.102.

The simplicity of this canon belies its ingenuity for, as the composer points out, it is "a canon without counterpoint".

This may at first seem to be a contradiction in terms, but is, in fact, a perfectly accurate description because, when each voice has announced the canonic subject and has returned to the note on which it began, that note is simply repeated in irregular semiquaver patterns - as if tapping out morse code. The only exception to this repetition occurs in the second and third bars of semiquavers where two tiny semitonal oscillations are introduced.

The subject itself grows naturally out of the apparently insignificant cello scales at the end of the Scherzino. Its arching shape would, under normal circumstances present a problem when the highest entry (top C on the violins) is reached. However the problem is avoided (as is monotony in this very obsessive section) by presenting alternate canonic entries in inversion. The irregular semiquaver patterns are not strictly repeated with each entry as they do not in themselves carry any thematic substance. Each voice plays its patterns independently of the others so that a kind of stippling effect results. Added to the low drum-roll from the third entry and the discreet woodwind doubling of each voice, the overall character of this section is uniquely menacing, lending a sense of smouldering anger which threatens to erupt at any moment.

After the final statement of Ex.113 and six bars of quiet semiquaver activation of the, by now, complete chord (scored for woodwind and strings), a transposition of the same chord is

simultaneously sounded by: Picc.3 (E^b), Ob.1 (B natural), Cl.1 (A), Bn.1 & Hn.1 (F) and Trb.3 & 4 (G and E^b). The result is a chord of ten different pitches and an increasing sense of urgency as the repeated notes begin to speed up to semiquaver triplets coupled by a general crescendo through the whole orchestra. As the tension increases, the trumpets and trombones enter with a minor third on B^b and D^b (bb.842-847). These notes provide the two missing ones to make a complete twelve-note chord, spread across the entire orchestra. The crescendo continues to grow inexorably until it reaches a point of almost unbearable intensity and the final section of the Symphony breaks in - reinforced by antiphonal timpani hammering out the notes B^b and D^b.

The final section of the work is extremely fast and it is also the longest at well over a thousand bars. The minor third on heavy brass and timpani is sustained for eighteen bars, though the constant timpani quavers leave no doubt as to the tempo. From b.889 a long passage begins in which the music of the first section (from b.36) is freely reworked - in the same way that the finale of Symphony No.4 reworked material from the Symphony's opening. The music given to the strings and woodwind clearly relates to material from Ex.103: **Ex.114.** This is followed by a reworking of Ex.103b, but this time repeated notes are accompanied by off-the-beat accents which are to become crucially important in the section: **Ex.115.**

The reworking of earlier material is achieved by a process of elaboration, so the material from the beginning of the first section's tutti (i.e. from bar 36) provides the basis of almost two hundred bars' music (bb.889-1074). During this passage much of the scoring is delicate with a generally low dynamic continually subject to occasional fortissimo flashes. There is throughout this passage the constant feeling of something held in reserve - an effect caused by one's awareness of a slower tempo underpinning the rapid activity and governing the large-scale motion of the music. An example of this occurs from bb.979-1074 where slowly rising, overlapping scales on the two tubas underlie the constant quaver activity of the rest of the orchestra. These scales - their resultant major seconds and major thirds constantly overlapping - are a development (by inversion) of Ex.109 from the Symphony's opening section and they eventually drive the music into the first of many massive climaxes (b.1075 onwards). The chromatic descents in the passage from b.1076 to b.1080 relate to the similar ones quoted in Ex.104 as deriving from a^2 and are another example of the reworking of material from the first section.

The off-beat accents of Ex.115 are developed from b.1084 in the woodwind and strings in a series of powerful ostinati (see also full orchestra at b.1107). These ostinati provide much of the driving energy and excitement of this section but are here cut short, at b.1114, by a tutti E^b followed by antiphonal exchanges of the minor third from the opening of

Ex.105. So the music up to this point has constituted a reworking of the 'first subject' group from Section 1.

As in Section 1, there follows a passage of relative calm. Exx.106 & 107 are reworked and expanded (bb.1137-46 and bb.1151-1162, respectively) with the off-the-beat figurations of Ex.115 incorporated into the texture (bb.1175-77). This passage runs to bar 1210 and provides a temporary period of relaxation before being brutally interrupted by a sff A^b (b.1211) on trombones, tubas and timpani from which the side drum emerges with a menacing crescendo on a rhythmic ostinato which is highly characteristic of the composer: **Ex.116.**

The fortissimo entry of trumpets and trombones in long note values at b.1237 is unexpectedly halted a few bars later and gives way to a series of imitative pianissimo entries on the strings. This passage is significant because it combines two elements from the 1st Section: the imitative semitonal figure from b.53 (see last bar of Ex.104) and, more importantly, the chord from Ex.102 in a contracted version, with major tenths turned into major thirds: **Ex.117.**

This ostinato is repeated seven times and, after the entry of the woodwind and the third and fourth trumpets playing Ex.116, a crescendo leads to another powerful brass entry (this time horns and tubas) playing a sustained B^b and F, as though attempting to establish a B^b tonal centre. But as soon as the F

moves up to a G^b, then to an A^b, there is an immediate diminuendo to ppp. At b.1270 the strings break in with an impassioned version of Ex.117, nearly three octaves higher than the original version but, tonally speaking, a major second lower. They are doubled by high woodwind and, from b.1277, are reinforced by Ex.116 on side drum and by horns, trumpets and lower woodwind playing Ex.117 in yet another transposition. The result - strings and upper woodwind playing B^b, C, D, E, F#, and the rest playing E^b, F, G, A, B natural - means that only two notes of the chromatic scale are missing - D^b and A^b. At b.1286, these are dramatically supplied by the entry of trombones, tubas and both sets of timpani, resulting in the third and longest brass interjection in long note-values - a passage of considerable grandeur (bb.1289 - 1314).

Having successfully shaken off the insidious influence of Ex.102, which has so far resulted in complete stasis on each reappearance, the music moves into a quiet, more purposeful phase in which Ex.107 is again developed: **Ex.118**. This passage, running from b,1314 to b.1408 is scored mainly for woodwind and strings and is, on the whole, quiet but active, occasionally spurred on by Ex.116 from the side drum. This rhythm, however, becomes disruptive from b.1397 - the side drum being joined by third and fourth trumpets in a gradual crescendo. At the climax of this passage (b.1408) the chord from Ex.102 reappears, harshly scored in a series of staggered entries for flutes, trumpets, trombones, high strings, bassoons, tubas and basses.

The chord appears first transposed a semitone below its original pitch then, at b.1411 to 1416, it reappears at the original pitch with C in the bass. There follows a series of oscillating semitonal phrases, scored for woodwind and low strings and based on Ex.103x, which become shorter as they chromatically rise with increasing frequency (bb.1417-1432). The outcome is a short, but massive, tutti involving chords based upon Ex.102, and its predominant major tenths (thirds) but not corresponding to it precisely.

The tutti abruptly ceases at b.1444 leaving the strings playing a series of sustained, mysterious, almost Beethovenian chords pianissimo and tremolando. Against this, selected woodwind and brass menacingly enter with a series of four transpositions of Ex.102 all sustained for several bars with a crescendo and diminuendo and separated by gradually fewer bars' rest. They act as a kind of 'warning signal' for what is to prove to be the final, most sustained, and most violent assault of the whole symphony. At the same time however they serve as a reminder of the static backdrop against which the drama of this work is set.

With a sudden lunge to an A major chord at b.1492 the final part of the section begins. The entry of the tuba and horn at b.1494 combines figs.x and b from the first section and is centred on the key of G: **Ex.119.**

This idea generates a long passage from b.1518-1577, which steadily grows in intensity over a series of menacingly rising chords on the brass. The fierce fortissimo chords at bb.1586-1591 relate directly to the passage from bar 51 of Section 1 (c.f. Ex.104) and, after a passage in which the strings and lower woodwind adopt the rhythmic ostinato of Ex.116, the same passage returns, but with the chords changed from diminished 7ths to chords of the flattened 7th (c.f. bb.1585-1591 and bb.1604-1608).

The astonishing passage from b.1586-1887 must surely rank as one of the most unrelentingly aggressive in all symphonic literature. Its material is often strikingly simple, built mainly from fig.x as heard in Ex.119, from the off-the-beat accents first noticed in Ex.115 and from the all-pervasive rhythm of Ex.116 which drives the music forward, like some kind of nightmarish out-of-control machine, through a series of shattering climaxes (see b.1669, b.1709, b.1746, b.1817). The way in which each overwhelming climax is somehow capped by another great wave of energy surely defies description or, indeed, comparison, yet the music never descends to the level of indiscriminate noise or cheap dramatic effect. Everything is germane to the rest of the work and this is what gives it a sense of complete inevitability.

It seems quite natural when, after the momentary and heart-stopping pause at b.1841, the minor third of Ex.104

returns in close canon and chases its own tail, as it were, the tonality gradually rising - A, B, C♯, D♯ and F, before low woodwind, horns, trombones and tutti strings blast out a final derivation of the potent Ex.103: **Ex.103.**

With a mighty effort the music lunges onto a deafening 'sffff' chord which is held for a full twenty bars (bb.1868-1887). The chord is a combination of two chords of the flattened 7th, on C and B^b, derived from b.1604 - B^b is the key which has, from time to time, proved to be a stabilizing force in this Symphony, is, of course, associated with the chord of Ex.102 and it is a breathtaking moment when, at b.1888, the massive tutti suddenly stops to reveal Ex.102 on the strings, as impassive and as unyielding as ever.

There are three violent attemps by the rest of the orchestra to dislodge the chord in the same manner as the end of Section 1. The first two attempt to reassert B^b (bb.1895-7, bb.1906-1912), the other tries to establish A, then C (bb.1921-1923) - all to no effect. At bar 1934, the two sets of timpani break in with a tritone on A^b and D but quickly disappear into the background, the chord remaining completely unchanged. In a soft reminiscence of the end of Section IV, the woodwind enter with a transposition of Ex.102 a minor third higher and oscillate semitonally (bb.1962-1977). The missing B^b and D^b make the resultant twelve-note chord emerge on the trumpets and drums in a massive crescendo (bb.1975-1984).

During this crescendo the strings momentarily stop playing,but as the trumpets and drums reach a fortissimo cut-off, the strings resume their original sphinx-like glare and the Symphony ends with Ex.102 sustained exactly as it was at the work's opening, before fading out note-by-note from the bottom upwards.

This symphony will always hold a special place in Simpson's output. Although he has subsequently written works in which the thematic screw is tightened much further than in this symphony, the integration between form and content displayed in the 5th will remain unique. The basic premise of the work - what Bayan Northcott memorably characterised as "steadfast-consciousness-in-adversity"[2]. - is utterly original and, indeed, unrepeatable. The work's 'psychological programme' is expressed with such clarity and in so compelling a manner as to be capable of communicating itself to the listener who has no prior knowledge of that aspect of the work. Certainly, the work could only be the result of a profound psychic upheaval triumphantly resolved. However, the symphony is no angst-ridden piece of overblown rhetoric - such an approach would be totally alien to Simpson's artistic outlook. Instead the work is realistic - hence the ambivalent ending, which is the only possible conclusion such a work could have. In a century characterised by a disproportionate number of artistic statements which are essentially negative or escapist in nature, a work of this kind stands as a rare and powerful

statement of sanity. It is perhaps this quality above all others which dominates Simpson's music and it is the passionate clarity with which the 5th Symphony expresses that quality that makes it so special.

Notes

1. Broadcast conversation with Ronald Stevenson 3/v/73.
2. Bayan Northcott: '1980: A Year of Simpson'
   Tempo 135 (Dec.1980)

SYMPHONY NO.6 (1976-77)

If the 4th and 5th Symphonies can be seen as broadly complementary works, then the same is also true of the next two which, like their predecessors, were written in quick succession and display completely opposite external characteristics - one extrovert, the other dark and brooding.

As with the 5th Symphony, No.6 has certain clearly defined programmatic associations. It is dedicated to the gynaecologist Professor Ian Craft who suggested the idea of a symphony that might be compared to the growth of a living organism from a fertilised germ. From what has been revealed so far of Simpson's musical philosophy and method, his enthusiastic adoption of this idea will come as no surprise - indeed Simpson has said that "such an idea is so close to the essence of one kind of symphonic music that there is no need for programmatic description; the growth of the music should be enough."[1]. However there are certain passages which can be quite easily identified as relating to particular stages in the process of conception and birth. They range from the structurally analogous, for instance the idea of deriving musical material from two 'germs' which combine at the opening, to the explicitly descriptive, for example the increasingly rapid 'contractions' in brass and timpani from b.296 to b.367 leading to the moment of 'birth' (b.369).

Naturally enough, the symphony is in one movement - a single organism - and everything is unified, both intervalically and in terms of tempo. The various tempi of the work are all related by the same process of 'metric modulation' outlined in the chapters on the 1st and 3rd Symphonies. Nevertheless, a generalised four section outline is discernable, comprising an opening Adagio which begins gently and grows in power and energy, a fierce Allegro leading to the 'central crisis' and the moment of 'birth', a gentle Intermezzo and a final large-scale Allegro. This formal outline corresponds to the most important elements of Simpson's suggested programme. After the opening,

> "... everything slowly grows, and anything not strictly evolved from the basic fertilised cell may be regarded as nourishment quickly absorbed. You ARE what you eat! One of the memorable qualities of life is the enormous force in its imperceptible growth - we are all familiar with the way a growing tree can split a rock. So this 'antenatal' part of the symphony has something formidable in it, until the central crisis.
>
> "After that, we could say, the concious, mobile individual emerges. It is not as yet fully formed; as an infant it is at first dependent - so the next stage is gentle, uncertain, exploratory. But there is an accelerating gain in freedom and energy, both physical and mental, and the symphony ends in full vigour - in the prime of life, so to speak, when at length a clear tonality is evolved."[2].

It will already be clear that this 'pseudo-programme' (as Simpson calls it) is no mere picaresque illustration of an external situation. It affects the very form and substance of the music and is not simply 'grafted-on' as a surface feature.

The programme, therefore, deserves to be treated with the greatest seriousness, because it is, quite literally, germane to the work.

The orchestra used is more modest than that of the two previous symphonies: double woodwind, with the addition of piccolo, bass clarinet and contrabassoon; four horns, two B^b trumpets, three trombones, tuba; timpani and percussion (three players); strings. Apart from a couple of tam-tam strokes - the first appearance of this instrument in a Simpson symphony - the orchestra has no unusual features.

In Simpson's words, the two 'germs' at the opening are "a motile one, made mainly of minor thirds... [which] swims quietly towards the static one, a little cluster of notes spanning a major third with two extra notes entering a fourth either side of it": **Ex.121. a & b.**

Simpson points out that the second germ is really a series of fifths coiled in on itself, and suggests that this may be compared, perhaps, to a DNA molecule. As he puts it, "it certainly results in many special differentiations as the cell proliferates." Chains of interlocking fifths certainly do form a crucially important element in the work as it progresses. Indeed, the prominence given to this interval in the 6th Symphony marks the beginning of an increasing interest in the generative powers of the perfect fifth and its inversion, the

perfect fourth - as will be seen in the analyses of the subsequent symphonies. As soon as the two cells are presented, they combine: **Ex.122.**

The first chord of this example derives from the coiled-up fifths of Ex.121b whilst the chord on the third minim of the first complete bar is made up of the minor thirds of Ex.121a. All of this happens quickly, in relation to the overall size of the work - it takes just six bars to arrive at this point. If this seems like indecent haste in the representation of such a momentous event, it is worth remembering that the remarkable films of cells being fertilized demonstrate that, once the two combine, they waste no time in beginning the long process of proliferation.

The final chord of Ex.122, a diminished 7th, is sustained by the horns and clarinets and combined with another diminished 7th on the other woodwinds (and double basses). The practice of combining two diminished 7th chords was first encountered in the 4th Symphony and has subsequently become an integral part of Simpson's harmonic language. In this case, the quiet sustaining of the resultant eight-note chord over scurrying demisemiquaver scales on muted strings suddenly lends the music a sense of highly-charged, yet mysteriously contained, drama before it returns to the calm opening (b.9). Bars 9-17 rework the material of the first eight bars and generate, from bar 18,

an important theme which combines the thirds and fifths of the two germs but now with greater rhythmic definition: **Ex.123.**

The first two phrases of this passage (first phrase - strings, second phrase - woodwind) are, of course, sequential. They also contain all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. The use of all twelve pitches is, by this stage, a fairly regular occurence in Simpson's music but their appearances have tended so far to be exclusively harmonic (e.g. the twelve-note chords in Symphonies 3 and 5). Here, for the first time, Simpson is utilising the twelve pitches melodically, and their linear, as opposed to vertical, use becomes more prevalent from this symphony onwards. When dealing with any music in which phrases or chords contain all twelve notes, it is natural to associate it with Schoenberg's twelve note 'method', but, in Simpson's case, it is important to bear in mind that the aims are quite different. This matter is dealt with at far greater length in Chapter 1 but in the present context, the use of all the notes within this important melody can be thought of as the means by which maximum tonal variety is produced within its limited intervallic structure - an instance of the "many special differentiations" refered to in Simpson's introductory analogy.

The following two phrases (bb.19-20) replace the interval of the minor third with a major third. This derives from Ex.121 - the resultant major third 'cluster' formed by violins and violas. And it is the implied eight-note major scale formed by

this 'cluster' which provides the basis for the continuation of this passage: **Ex.124.**

Exx.123-4 provide the basis for a largely imitative passage (bb.21-38), whose severely purposeful sense of accumulation is most impressive and which culminates in a brief fortissimo tutti on the last crotchet beat of bar 38. The sudden drop in dynamic which follows instigates a passage in which the basic interval types so far encountered are presented harmonically: the 'background' chord on tremolando strings is built out of interlocking fifths (c.f. Ex.121), whilst the woodwind interjections (bb.40-43) constitute a chord of interlocking minor and major thirds, which is enlivened by breaking each note of the chord into fast, repeated-note figurations, in much the same way as the gradually built-up chord was broken down in the fourth section of Symphony No.5.

The way in which the woodwind melody from b.52 is derived from the basic intervals of minor thirds and perfect fifths can be readily seen: **Ex.125.** What makes this melody essential to the progress of the work is that it introduces, very subtly, a greater sense of movement. This is done by replacing the heavily accented crotchet pulse of Exx.123-4 with an increasingly insistent quaver pulse during a fine contrapuntal passage from b.53-72. When compared with the opening of the symphony, it will be seen that at this point the process of acceleration, which constitutes the symphony's first half, is

already well underway. This is in fact confirmed at bar 73 when, after an abrupt pause, a version of Ex.123 returns and appears to momentarily arrest the progress of the music. This is followed by a reworking of bb.39-52 - again with interlocking fifths on the strings forming a chord against which another chord, built of minor thirds, is heard on the woodwind (bb.78-81).

There are, however, two important differences on this appearance. Firstly, the passage is considerably shortened and, secondly, the woodwind chord is no longer broken up into irregular patterns of repeated notes but is now heard in continuous demisemiquavers. The inevitable result is both a greater sense of continuity and a stronger sense of movement due to the placing of a regular pulse.

This passage represents a kind of 'gear-change' in the first half of the symphony. From it there emerges a passage in which the increasingly persistent quaver pulse is reinforced by a regular series of on- and off-the-beat exchanges between strings and woodwind. The slower harmonic rhythm is at first controlled by the horns and bass clarinet: **Ex.126.**

This harmonic rhythm, which is defined by the mainly stepwise part movement, could be described as consisting of a series of cadences - one every two bars - with the resolution on the second crotchet beat of every other bar. In this way,

the passage between bb.106 and 128 moves through the following keys: d minor, E^b major, g^b minor, G major; then, in four-bar phrases, c minor, C# major; finally, in two-bar phrases again and over a more rigorous bass-line, d# minor, E major, f# minor. So a harmonic sequence can be traced involving pairs of alternate minor/major cadences with the major cadence always a semitone above the minor one. It will be seen that the series of cadences broadly moves from flat keys to sharp ones and there is a complementary crescendo throughout the passage, until a massive climax is reached at b. 129 with the clear return of part of Ex.123 one bar later on the heavy brass.

The relationship between active foreground and more slowly moving background outlined above is a major factor in this symphony - to an even greater extent than in Simpson's previous ones - and it is immediately pursued in the passage which follows. An increased sense of fast-moving surface activity is provided by rapid demisemiquaver imitations in the strings: **Ex.127.** This kind of rapid alternation of two voices to produce an ostinato pattern is a feature not only of this symphony but of much of Simpson's music. In this case, it relates to the alternating chords of Ex.126. Again, harmony is controlled by a series of slow moving sequences in the bass until, at b.153, against a continuation of Ex.127, the woodwind develop Ex.125 in austere two-part writing: **Ex.128.**

This strenuous contrapuntal invention continues until b.199. In its course, the Ex.127 figurations switch to the woodwind (b.172) and the violins, violas and cellos take up the two-part contrapuntal development of Ex.125. They introduce a rising scalic idea in semiquavers which can, in fact, be traced back to bar 7 of the work (from which Ex.127 derives). The rising scale, however, provides a foil to the return of the descending Ex.123 at bb.180-183 (now consisting entirely of a chain of descending fifths covering all twelve pitches). Rising and falling scales are combined at b.186 to drive the music to a massive climax twelve bars later. The whole of this passage is extremely exciting and powerfully consolidates the quaver pulse through the frenetic demisemiquaver imitation.

The sudden drop to pianissimo at b.200 comes initially as a shock, but the appearance of repeated semiquavers in the bass from b.202, combined with the introduction, two bars later, of quietly scurrying demisemiquavers on the strings, confirms the continuing quaver pulse. The harmony is at first defined by quietly sustained groups of three notes, each a tone apart. The resulting major third relates to the chord produced in bb.4-5 of the symphony (c.f. bb.200-205 and Ex.121). From b.217 onwards (clearly related to b.106 et seq.), the harmonic progressions which derive from this three-note chord are combined with the fifths and minor thirds basic to the opening of the symphony (bb.223-5: trombones and horns, lower woodwind, tuba, timpani). The melodic material also undergoes

development: bb.234-7, flute, clarinet and bassoon, to form a new derivative of Ex.123, and this, combined with increasingly energetic demisemiquaver writing, leads to the first actual written change of pulse in the symphony (b.248). Here the speed of the previous quaver becomes the new crotchet pulse, but the music is continuous and the change undetectable by the innocent ear. The semitonal shakes on the strings (previously demisemiquavers, now semiquavers) become pervasive, spreading through the rest of the orchestra. They are highly characteristic of Simpson and are to be found in most of his later music. The semitonal shakes are arranged in rising scalic formations from b.248 to b.270 and are combined with 'dominant' to'tonic' interjections which occur at successively lower fifths from b.250 to b.259 on timpani and bass instruments. The return of the modified version of Ex.123, made up entirely of fifths (bb.262-280), drives the music into the next section.

From b.296 to b.367 there occur the celebrated 'contractions', which lead to the moment of 'birth' at b.368ff. the whole passage is marked 'poco a poco accelerando' - a rather unusual indication for Simpson, who favours acceleration by redivision of the basic pulse rather than conventional acceleration. The passage consists of three important elements which operate simultaneously. Firstly, the violins exchange rushing descending scalic passages. Secondly, the trombones play a long, gradually rising melody, which is later elaborated by the woodwind (from b.326). Finally, in the bass, a long A/G♯

pedal trill is reinforced by repeated A's on the timpani. These accents occur first at four bars' distance, then three and eventually, two. These are the increasingly rapid contractions alluded to in the programme note. Naturally enough, they fulfil a dominant fundtion so that the entire seventy-three bar episode constitutes a kind of massive dominant preparation of the huge fff chord which crashes in at b.369, after what might justifiably be termed a 'pregnant pause' at b.368!

The massive chord at b.369 could be seen as an enormous interrupted cadence; in relation to the preceding seventy bars, the bass-line actually moves V-VI and it would seem that Simpson is inviting the listener to hear it in this way by delaying the real moment of 'resolution' until b.409 - a D/A fifth in the bass. The climactic passage from b.369 to b.388 consists of four widely spaced chords over a pedal B: **Ex.129.** the notes D and A also remain common to all four chords whilst the rest of each chord consists of minor thirds (except for the third chord which involves major seconds). So, despite their complexity, the chords are still germane to the opening material, the final chord entirely consisting of interlocking major and minor thirds.

Following the arrival of the final chord of Ex.129 (b.385), there is a gradual diminuendo and a consequent relaxation of tension. However, the bass-line continues to react to the upheaval which has just taken place with strongly

accented descending fifths. Dare one interpret these as a kind of 'afterbirth' to Ex.125? Clearly, the intervallic/rhythmic identity is related to that figure but it is now devoid of thematic content - its purpose, for the time being, having been served.

Despite the formidable processes alluded to in the first half of the symphony, the fact remains that the life-form, when it emerges, is exposed and vunerable. It is therefore appropriate that the long-awaited resolution onto D (at b.409) is hushed and gentle. At this point the second half of the symphony gets underway with a kind of a 'post-natal intermezzo'.

The tempo has returned to that of b.248 (there had been a brief doubling of speed at the climax - bb.369-391) but the harmonic rhythm has changed so that the music is now more of a one-in-a-bar Allegretto than a full-blooded 3/4 Allegro. It begins as a mainly three-part texture with 1st and 2nd violins exchanging short phrases which encompass the interval of the minor third and which provide a counterpoint to a gentle oboe melody based on the fifths and major thirds found in the symphony's opening bars: **Ex.130.** though obviously new and independent, this material is nevertheless derived from the very opening.

Throughout the whole of the ensuing section the interval of the fifth is rarely absent for long. Groups of interlocking fifths frequently form a bass-line as well as providing much of the thematic material in other parts - as, for example, in the delightful imitative passage heard against background chords on the strings produced from the basic intervals: **Ex.131.** In fact, imitation is of primary importance in the whole of this section and one wonders whether it is pushing the analogy too far to point out that advancement, at an early stage in the development of the conscious being, is achieved by imitation.

Musically, imitation can easily suggest fugue and, at b.489, a quiet fugato passage does indeed emerge on the strings. The most important intervals of the subject are the minor third and perfect fourth and the music has a greater sense of mobility than anything so far heard in this section of the symphony. This results from the use of syncopation which gently urges the music forward, but without forcing the issue: **Ex.132.** The fugue is in four voices and it gives rise to a new variant which is also treated fugally from b.530: **Ex.133.** This variant takes as its starting point the repeated notes at the beginning of Ex.132. They are now heard simply as regular staccato quavers, rather than syncopations and the minor third/perfect fourth of Ex.132's third and fourth bars become the basis of a tiny rhythmic cell (marked 'x') from which much is to grow.

The fugal development of Ex.133 is more fully worked out than that of Ex.132 and it extends from bb.528-574, the dynamics remaining pianissimo throughout. However, a sudden powerful crescendo at bb.576-7 indicates that more forceful things are beginning to stir. The crescendo involves a chord built up by adding groups of minor thirds (or, in augmentation, minor tenths) and this 'resolves', on the last beat of b.577, onto a chord made up of alternating major and minor thirds: very similar to the final chord of Ex.129. The built-up chord, its 'resolution' and the subsequent fifths in the bass cover all twelve pitches and this anticipates the next, more violent crescendo which takes place through bb.597-603. Here, eleven notes of the chromatic scale are sustained in a widely-spaced string chord, whilst the twelfth note (D) is heard in repeated quavers in the extreme bass. The bottom note is reinforced during the crescendo by low woodwind and brass and also by repeated quavers on timpani with a hemiola accent which throws a 6/8 pulse across the prevailing 3/4 grouping. The fact that this lowest note is a D is surely not without programmatic significance. This is the key which the music has clearly been attempting to consolidate from the very opening and it is a measure of the increasing power of this section (and, by analogy, the gradual development of the conscious individual from birth) that this particular pitch should now spur the music forward, having been rather tentatively established at the start of the section.

The hemiola accent provides the basis of the new tempo - a 3/4 metre exactly double the speed of the previous one - and the former repeated quavers now turn into crotchets as the strings softly articulate their twelve-note chord as a regular pulsation. (This repetition of the chord was an afterthought - added over ten years after the work's completion and to very great effect.)

The new tempo gives rise to material which, though still graceful and unaggressive, is more robust in character. The melody presented on the 2nd violins from b.622 forms the basis of the music until b.855 and, although it appears new, it will be clearly seen that the relationship to Ex.121 is close. When the octave displacements are removed, the opening derives from the prominent major third of Ex.121b, whilst the rest is largely made up of minor thirds and perfect fifths: **Ex.134.**

Another crucial feature of the ensuing two hundred and thirty-three bars is the gradual introduction of groups of four quavers thrown across the one-in-a-bar 3/4 pulse. This first occurs at bar 667, and it is clearly an extension of the hemiola idea introduced at the end of the previous section - although this particular pattern is more radical and consequently more disruptive. The result of its increasing prevalence is, naturally, an increase in tension - this is reflected at b.724 in a more forceful derivative of Ex.134

which now incorporates the triplet rhythm, 'x', first encountered in Ex.133: **Ex.135.**

From b.789 the relationship between the two tempi becomes increasingly strained and the incursions of the four-quaver pattern tend to be more aggressive until, at b.855, the pattern takes over as the basis of a new 2/4 tempo with the new minim beat equal to the previous dotted minim. It is the first of three changes of metre which occur in rapid succession; the second appearing at b.867 when the music moves from its A pedal-point of the previous eleven bars to one on G. Here, the quaver speed remains unchanged but each bar is now 6/8, so that the new dotted crotchet beat is half as long again as the previous crotchet. After another eleven bars the time-signature reverts to 2/4, but with new crotchet equal to the previous dotted crotchet. The result is that the 2/4 pulse at b.878 is substantially slower than that at b.855. This passage represents one of the clearest examples in Simpson's music of his favoured practice of 'metric modulation'.

Having achieved a fairly fast 2/4 tempo, the music settles into a vigorous Allegro 'finale', the speed now remaining unchanged until the end - some three hundred and seventy-eight bars. Much of the music's considerable energy is provided through consistent use of fig.'x', or its variants of which the first is an idea in sextuplets and consisting of notes spanning the compass of a minor third and revolving around a central

pitch: **Ex.136.** At b.896, this figure combines with the minor thirds and fifths from the opening (also heard in inversion as major sixths and fourths) to produce a melody whose vigour is partly due to its implicit sense of gradually rising tonality in the first six bars: **Ex.137.** This material is the basis of much of the ensuing development and it is important to mention here two more ideas which are evolved: firstly, the combination of 'x' and its development from Ex.136 with a chromatically descending bass-line - **Ex.138** - and, secondly, a declamatory figure which clearly derives from Ex.123: **Ex.139.** Both of these ideas feature prominently in this final section; the descending bass-line of the former controlling the harmonic movement of later passages, the distinctive melodic contour of the latter providing (by Simpson's standards) an unusually explicit series of references to the work's opening. The passage from b.882 to b.1007 can be viewed as one large musical paragraph, but, at b.1008, the first major contrast of this section occurs. This is achieved not so much thematically (the material is still closely related to Ex.136) but texturally (initially, mainly woodwind after a passage of forceful tutti) and harmonically. The harmony is at first slowed down by a pedal-point C lasting four and a half bars and then by a series of mainly chromatic descents in even crotchets on woodwind and trombones: **Ex.140.** These descending lines obviously relate to Ex.138 and, ultimately, to Ex.126 from much earlier in the symphony, but the fact that the prevailing pulse is now the crotchet, as

opposed to the quaver, results in a consequent slowing of harmonic rhythm.

The passage extends to b.1027, whereupon the earlier, more vigorous writing returns, with 'x' proving to be an increasingly important element in urging the music forward (e.g. strings, bb.1049-1084). During this section an apparently new fanfare-like idea is introduced, to the accompaniment of descending fifths in the bass: **Ex.141.** This idea is not as new as it may appear: the semitonal dotted figure at the opening is indeed a new element but it provides a kind of extended anacrusis to the main element - a descending fourth which clearly relates to the oboe solo at b.5 (see Ex.121b).

This figure, in particular, is used to drive the music through a series of climactic points, each of which is punctuated by a cymbal clash (bb.1047, 1058, 1067, 1084). The last of these climaxes - the most vehement - suddenly drops to a pianissimo and a quietly insistent ostinato, based on 'x' on the strings: **Ex.142.** Here again, pedal-points are used to slow down the harmonic rhythm. On top of this ostinato, woodwind and horns softly sustain notes to produce gradually shifting chords - a derivation of Ex.140. The descending bass-line, noted elsewhere in this final section, figures prominently in this passage. Its appearance is adumbrated at bb.1085-1092 and bb.1118-1128, and its function is to gradually change the harmony as the ostinato in the strings continues. Above this

there appear, from time to time, flashes of colour on suspended cymbal (played with metal sticks - b.1102, b.1143), brief fortissimo accents in the bass (b.1100, b.1112) and, later on, sudden wild flurries, based on Ex.136, in 1st violins (bb.1143-1149) and clarinet (bb.1154-1158).

Throughout the whole of this section, a very gradual crescendo is effected and, combined with the continuous ostinato and the pounding quavers in the bass, the sense of impending climax becomes irresistible. By the time a general fortissimo is reached (along with climactic cymbal clashes), at b.1193, fig.'x' has continued, almost without interruption, for over one hundred and seventy bars. The whole section has taken on the character of a fast march and the momentum generated leads to a splendidly inevitable arrival in the key of D at b.1211. The final pages of the work are clearly the crowning glory of the entire symphony and the entirely organic way by which they are achieved leaves the passage completely free of bombast. Fig.'x' continues to the end in high violins and woodwind, whilst Ex.141 finally comes to fruition in a glorious phrase on the woodwind: **Ex.142.**

The final 'fff' D major chord, reinforced by cymbals and tam-tam, is sustained for twelve bars before an arpeggiated version of 'x' drives home this massively positive conclusion. It is worth noting that the simple D major chord is given an unusually sonorous quality firstly by spreading the major third

across the entire compass and, secondly, by the use of a high trumpet triad combined with clarinets in their lowest register.

No conclusion could be in greater contrast to that of Simpson's 5th Symphony and yet both works are directly concerned, albeit in very different ways, with a close observation of certain aspects of the human condition.[3]. The earlier symphony was concerned with the clarity of consciousness during upheaval, whilst this one celebrates the life-force itself. In a sense these two symphonies reverse the progression made by Nielsen in his 3rd and 4th Symphonies from a celebration of (to quote Simpson) "the sheer joy of living" to the confrontation of darker aspects of our existence. Simpson is not a naive composer; he places great emphasis on the quality of human experience and would reject an artistic stance which is escapist in nature. Bearing this in mind, the (admittedly, likely) criticism that Symphony No.6 somehow evades the issue by ending "in the prime of life", as opposed to reflecting inevitable decay and dissolution, can be dismissed by pointing out that the being which created this work is clearly at the height of his compositional powers at the time of its completion. Therefore, every note of this symphony details experience, not speculation.

Notes

1. Composer's programme note.
2. ibid..
3. "Since the creature that made the symphony passes for a member of the species, we may as well suppose (and that was Professor Craft's optimistic notion) that its subject is human." (Composer's note)

SYMPHONY NO.7 (1977)

This symphony had to wait longer than any of the others for its first performance. It was originally intended to form Side 2 of a record of Symphony No.2 which R.C.A. planned to make and it was suggested that the two works should use the same classical-sized orchestra. However, the recording project came to nothing and Symphony No.7 remained unperformed for seven years - until October 1984 when the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra premiered it under Brian Wright. Ironically, this work has now been commercially recorded - by another company - whilst the Second remains unrecorded.

Like No.6, this symphony is in one movement; in virtually every other respect it is its complete antithesis. There are no 'programmatic' associations in this piece, unlike the previous two symphonies; it is a compelling and concentrated piece of pure music. In this respect it is interesting to note that one of the work's dedicatees was a musician of the highest calibre - the symphony carries an inscription to Hans Keller and his wife, the artist, Milein Cosman.

In many ways, No.7 is the most Sibelian of Simpson's symphonies. He has an extremely high regard for Sibelius and particularly admires the control of movement displayed in his later symphonies. In his own Seventh Symphony Simpson seems to

reflect both the dark intensity of Sibelius' 4th Symphony and the mastery of pace, particularly characteristic of Sibelius' Seventh. There is also a sense of inner tension and concentration which is highly Sibelian. In this case, it is partly a result of the much reduced orchestral resources which dictate that the composer must eschew the really big orchestral gestures and sustain the drama by intensity of invention. This is not to suggest that the work is lacking in big sounds - indeed, Simpson points out that a large string complement is required "to balance some rather forcible wind and timpani writing" - it is simply that the actual decibel level is inevitably less than that in some parts of the previous symphonies.

The orchestra is the same as No.2 (double woodwind, horns and trumpets; timpani; strings) with one major difference: the trumpets here are crooked in B^b rather than the high D trumpets in the earlier work. So there is rather less brilliance in the trumpet writing.

Formally, the work divides into four main sections, though the musical argument remains continuous. Unity is once again emphasised by relating the tempo of one section to that of its predecessor so that, for example, the first Allegro section, at b.133 is exactly twice as fast as the previous section (the same is also true for the second Allegro section, at b.513).

As one has now come to expect, the basic material of the symphony is to be found in the very opening: **Ex.143.** It is not so much the melody itself which is of great thematic importance to the work, but the intervals which it contains. Simpson explains:

> "The first interval to be played is a straightforward rising fifth. The remaining notes of the theme, if played crudely together, would form only an ugly dissonance of five adjacent semitones. But this is treated as a major third enclosing a major second, both enclosing a central note; these intervals can be spread in many ways to produce a considerable variety of harmonic effect. They are not treated as a 'cluster' with the central note some kind of bogus 'tonic'."[1].

The harmonic presentation of the intervals, to which the composer refers, occurs immediately, with the major third on the flutes, the major second in the bass and the pivotal central note punctuating the texture, in staccato accents, scored for trumpets and drums: **Ex.144.**

Of course, in addition to the "variety of harmonic effect" of the different combinations of these intervals, there is also a variety of intervallic implications within the opening melody. For example, the second interval to be heard is a descending major sixth and, as this is immediately repeated (and associated with a forceful rhythmic pattern), it is likely that this is the interval which will imprint itself most firmly on the listener's mind at the opening. There also occurs, in bar 2, a rising minor seventh and, in the next bar, a

descending minor ninth. Simpson's music rarely makes extensive use of intervals wider than a perfect fifth and he most characteristically uses seconds and thirds. (This has led some commentators to a false comparison with the music of Bartok, a composer for whom Simpson has little affection.) So the tendency, when faced with a wide interval like the major sixth at bar 2, would be to think of it in its inverted form - a minor third. And it is indeed this interval which plays a far more crucial part in the symphony than does the major sixth.

The harmonic implications of the intervals of the major second and major third are immediately investigated by placing two major seconds in strings and horns beneath two major thirds (oboes and clarinets). The qualities of the individual intervals are then emphasised by individual crescendi/diminuendi for each group of instruments: **Ex.145.**

A further reworking of the major third/major second/ central note combination occurs at b.30 where the 'central note' is actually placed in the bass: **Ex.146.** This example emphasises Simpson's introductory admonition not to view this pivotal note as "some kind of bogus tonic" and, in this respect, one should be careful not to view the repeated C's of Ex.144 (later reintroduced) as the tonal centre of the work.

By b.39, the so far intense activity of the music gives way to a sustainded unison G through which a gradual diminuendo

leads, in turn, to contrasting material at a slower tempo: **Ex.147.** Here, the relationship to the opening lies in the intervals produced between the parts - the perfect fifth featuring particularly prominently. The figure in the bass at b.51 is to play a particularly important part later in the work and its intervals are a kind of contraction of the 1st violin phrase at b.46, which, in turn, can be traced to the B^b, D, C# figure in bb.2 and 3.

An augmented version of Ex.147 becomes the basis of bb.53-60, at which point a further development of Ex.147 pushes the music to a fortissimo climax at b.67 - a chord based, like Ex.145, on combinations of major seconds and major thirds. this climactic chord rapidly disperses to make way for another, apparently new idea: **Ex.148.** As with the previous example, it is again subtly connected to the symphony's opening in terms of the intervals between each voice and, again, this material is to recur later in the work. Finally, in what is by Simpson's standards an unusually fragmented opening (at least in terms of the music's surface activity), there appears a quiet and enigmatic chorale: **Ex.149.** No explanation is given for the appearance of this idea - which at this point seems to be strangely removed from the main drama of the work - but it is to reappear on a number of occasions during its course, always more or less unchanged and always with the same air of sphinx-like calm. Motivically, its origin appears to be the bass line at b.51 (Ex.147).

An accelerando and crescendo in bar 88 lead the music into a section of much more purposeful activity. The impression given is of a long, mysterious opening eventually giving way to the main body of the work. However, Simpson points out in his programme note that this opening is "not an introduction". Instead, it is a passage which is not only closely argued in itself (as has been shown) but is also the seed from which the rest of the work grows. It is, therefore, in no way superfluous. In fact, the declamatory figure heard from bar 92 relates not only to the intervals of the very opening, but to the rhythm also: **Ex.150.** It instigates a vigorous tutti passage in which a melody line in the treble, a derivation of the upper line of Ex.149, is enlivened by its presention in oscillating demisemiquaver major thirds over a descending bass-line in which the interval of a fifth features prominently (bb.100-112). The dramatic force of this passage is heightened by fierce, off-beat, accented C's on trumpets and drums. These are based on a passage near the opening (Ex.144) and, as in that passage, accents are rhythmically irregular. During this passage, they emerge as a powerfully disruptive element. In bars 110-112, the accented notes move semitonally upwards to reach a sustained D on the trumpets at b.112. Naturally, after a certain amount of obsessive repetition of the note C, this move 'lifts' the listener's sense of prevailing tonality thereby contributing powerfully to the sense of momentum. As the persistent demisemiquaver figuration of the upper strings turns into a series of rushing scalic passages (from b.116), it

becomes apparent that the music has, almost imperceptibly, moved from a slow opening to a vigorous allegro. It is an impressive example of Simpson's ability to control pace which, as was mentioned earlier, is an important aspect of this symphony as a whole. The ability to control both foreground and background speed is crucial to this and the whole of this passage also involves a more slowly moving line shared by woodwind and lower strings. This line is built mainly out of descending fifths and, due to the sense of resolution implicit in the descending form of this interval, it tends to define the background speed (i.e. harmonic rhythm) whilst the foreground is dominated by the frenetic writing for upper strings. At bb.131-2, the wind and lower strings have a long chain of descending fifths (of a kind noted in the Sixth Symphony) and they cover eight notes of the chromatic scale (resulting in four 'perfect cadences', successively a tone lower in pitch.)

Having now achieved a real 'Allegro', the note values are halved, for ease of reading, so that the previous demisemiquavers now become semiquavers. This is very similar to the transition made at b.248 of Symphony No.6 - in this case, however, the ensuing passage is much longer (some two hundred and fifty-two bars before the next tempo change). The whole of this section can be divided into three subsections: firstly a continuation of the energetic previous passage (bb.133-175); secondly, a contrasting paragraph of quiet but active

development (bb.175-277) and, finally, another powerful and increasingly dramatic passage (bb.277-385).

The beginning of this section presents the basic intervals in a very similar way to that of the Symphony's opening (see Exx.144, 145). As with that passage, groups of major seconds and major thirds are spread across the full compass of the orchestra, the main difference being that, in this case, the texture is enlivened by continuous semiquaver activity on the upper strings (bb.135-143). With the arrival at the 'molto animato' marking (b.144) a passage of fierce conflict ensues. Structurally, its most important feature is a sustained and dissonant tutti at bb.153-161, where the chord of five adjacent semitones, first encountered at Ex.144, is presented in a new arrangement: Ex.151. This idea recurs at crucial moments later in the Symphony. But the most immediately arresting passage is the one immediately following Ex.151 where, against basically two-part counterpoint in the winds, the timpani hammer out repeated fortissimo C's in irregular, indeed totally unpredictable, rhythmic patterns. This is, of course, the outcome of the minatory repeated C's of the work's opening (Ex.144), but the effect here is fiercely disruptive, recalling, perhaps, the furious side-drum cadenza in the first movement of Nielsen's Fifth Symphony. This passage is short-lived however (some thirteen bars) and it is immediately succeeded by a sudden unexpected drop in dynamics to pp (b.176)

and a change of texture. This is the beginning of the second of the subsections outlined above.

The passage is largely concerned with the sound of the basic intervals, but they are now enlivened by the addition of a semitone shake which operates in an imitative way: **Ex.152.** Naturally, the appearance of the semiquavers helps to maintain some of the momentum generated by the previous subsection, even though the overall harmonic rhythm is now much slower. Imitation provides the basis of this lightly scored, scherzando-like section and its use, in both regular and inverted forms, results in *some engaging* dialogue between the melodic lines: **Ex.153.** This material forms the basis of a four-part quasi-fugato, beginning at b.277, which incorporates a fugal answer by free inversion: **Ex.154.** It will be noticed that the two pairs of subject/answer are each presented at the interval of the major third (one of the work's basic intervals), entries beginning on C and A^b, F and D^b respectively.

The emergence of a four-part texture brings about a change of mood and the beginning of the last of this section's subdivisions. The increasingly troubled nature of the music is emphasised by both a gradual general crescendo (from b.283) and the reintroduction of the timpani which, with two small exceptions, have been silent for over one hundred bars. The timpani are, by now, firmly associated in this work with a

sense of upheaval and their reappearance, at b.279, does indeed presage a long tutti full of strife and conflict.

Interestingly, the contribution of the trumpets and drums - originally the most noticable feature between bb.307-373 - was severely curtailed by the composer not too long after the first performance. The former explosively reiterated D's (obviously a violent derivation of Ex.144) were eliminated entirely, enabling the other parts to be heard more clearly. These other parts constitute a fierce confrontation of earlier material - the major seconds of the opening are to be heard in the tremolando violas and cellos; the major thirds in the high woodwind. The harmonic direction is determined by the long held notes in the bassoons (and later the basses and cellos) which steadily rise through the octave four times (from b.301, 318, 333, 346). This last gradual ascent through the octave incorporates material which the 1st violins have been insistently reintroducing since b.307 - the  pattern which emerged at Ex.153 (b.260) - its earlier scherzando-like quality now transformed into something more resembling a cry of protest. The adoption of this figure by the woodwind, from b.362, results in the violins in turn taking over the woodwind major thirds five bars later.

Having withheld the trumpets and timpani interjections during the passage just described, Simpson finally does reintroduce them, at b.377 - the brevity of their inclusion now

enhancing the power of their effect. The considerable vehemence generated by this passage drives the music into the next section without loss of impetus - an impressive feat when one realises that, at this point, the tempo is radically slowed down. The time signature changes to 3/2, though the speed of the crotchet unit remains the same, so at b.385, the music moves into a triple time exactly half the speed of the music which preceeded it.

The intensity of the music from b.385 is maintained in two main ways: firstly, there is no relief of the fortissimo dynamic which has prevailed for almost one hundred bars and, secondly, the tension is continued by the introduction of a second fugato passage, which is much fiercer, and more fully worked out, than that at b.277. The subject, announced by the 1st violins, in a synthesis of both the basic material of the symphony and its later developments - for example, the intervals from the opening are much in evidence, as are the semitonal shake from Ex.152 and the characteristic dotted rhythm of Ex.150 (ultimately derived from the very opening): **Ex.155.** It is clear, by now, that fugal writing is one of the foundations of Simpson's musical language and one does not have to look far in almost any of his works to find extended fugato passages. However, he is adept at 'disguising' or, at any rate rendering less immediately apparent, a passage which is in fact fugal. The passage from b.387 is a good example. Here he combines the very first appearance of the subject on the 1st

violins with a countersubject on the 2nd flute and oboes. This in turn renders the first appearance of the answer more subtle, because when it enters on the 2nd violins and violas a two-part contrapuntal exchange between the violins has been in progress for some time. There are two interrelated reasons for such a procedure: firstly, the fact that a two-part texture operates from b.387 helps to maintain continuity. The subject and the ensuing fugato are less of a self-contained 'statement' than they would otherwise have been - it is a continuation and intensification of the music which has just preceded it (unlike, for example, the fugue in the finale of Walton's First Symphony which, despite its relationship to other material in the work, remains very clearly a self-contained section). The second reason, directly related to the first, is a structural one. The tempo has just slowed down at the point where the fugato begins and to present the subject as a clear statement of a new phase in the work's development would result in a very forceful structural division being made in the listener's mind. This is absolutely contrary to the formal intentions - a fact emphasised by the urgent indication of "molto intensivo", implying that the impetus of the preceeding section must not be lost - indeed the composer refers to the passage as "high-powered".

The entries of the subject occur at bb.387, 395, 404, 419, and 432, each entry a semitone higher than the previous one. The contrapuntal texture remains basically in three-parts,

although there is a considerable stretch of two-part writing between bb.416 and 426 - a passage whose aural effect is more complex than might be expected, due to the, by now, characteristic, use of complex octave doublings. With the final entry of the subject at b.432 the three 'real' parts in the treble are underpinned by a series of V-I bass progressions, rhythmically based on the dotted figure in the Symphony's first bar. This moves the bass-line through groups of interlocking fifths: A to D, G to C in bb.432-3; B^b to E^b, E^b to A^b in bb.438-440. The appearance of these quasi-cadential figurations represents an important point of stabilisation after what has been a particularly tense and strenuous passage - even by *Simpson's standards*. Simpson takes advantage of this sense of impending 'arrival' (caused by the inevitable intervallic/rhythmic cross-reference with the work's opening) to make the structural shift which he had carefully avoided at b.385. First, he heightens the tension by exploiting the implications of the chain of fifths noted at bb.432-3 and bb.438-440 to produce between bb.444 and 450 a series of these V-I cadences which take in no less than eleven notes of the chromatic scale - a passage whose drama is heightened by explosive attacks on the timpani. This prepares for the grinding return at b.451 of the widely-spaced five-note chord, first encountered in Ex.144 but now related more closely to the climactic point at b.153 (Ex.151). As in Ex.151 the chord consists of a major third at the top, a major second in the middle and a single note (C) in the bass, but in this case C is

the central pitch of the potential five-note cluster, rather than the lowest (as was the case in Ex.151).

After a gradual diminuendo over this sustained chord the tempo virtually halves to Adagio (♩ = 66) (b.460). This is the calm centre of the symphony (though, in durational terms, it is well over half way through) and the extreme quiet which prevails throughout most of this section gives it a sense of withdrawal from the dramatic music which surrounds it. In this section a number of ideas, which previously occurred, seem to find their rightful place. The syncopated string figure, quoted in Ex.148, returns in a simplified form which enables one to appreciate how it derives from the basic intervals of the major third, fifth and major second (here presented as a minor 7th): **Ex.156.** At b.464 this idea is combined with the inversion of a figure first heard in the bass at b.51 (see Ex.147 - last bar): **Ex.157.** The combination of these elements - one syncopated, the other on the beat - leads to the reappearance at b.468 (and at the same pitch) of the mysterious brass 'chorale' first encountered in b.82 (Ex.149). Here, in the context of the surrounding material, this idea takes on much greater significance and when it is repeated a tone higher at b.480 it gently pushes the music to the first of two very brief fortissimos (at bb.484-5 and b.488-9). In each case, these climaxes are built upon the basic chord from Ex.144, with (in the first case) the major third at the top (E, G#), the major second in the bass (F,G) and the central note (F#) in the

middle. The second climax is the same except that it is transposed up a tone. In between the two climaxes the quaver figuration of Ex.157 is heard in dialogue with its inversion, which, naturally, relates the figure even more closely to Ex.147. The figure then proves to be the basis of the quiet dialogue which follows the second climax (i.e. from b.490) and to this dialogue is added a rocking perfect fourth (b.495 and b.505) which is like a distant echo of the prominent rocking fourths in the fugue subject of Ex.155. From b.490 to b.512 a sense of total calm envelopes the music - a calm quite without any definable emotional quality; just a point of stillness and contemplation. Such moments occur in other Simpson works, most notably the openings of the Fifth Symphony and the Seventh String Quartet. In both cases these openings can be seen as the background against which the main drama of the work unfolds (in both cases, the calm music returns at the end). The same is also true of this work, except that in this case the point of stillness lies deep <u>within</u> the work. This sense of the Symphony "turning in on itself", makes it perhaps more psychologically complex than the other two works and may provide a clue to what is to happen at the end of the final section which begins at b.513.

This last section of the work is in a fast 2/4 and it takes up the rocking fourths from the end of the previous section, combining them with a quiet semitonal clash on the trumpets and a belligerent dotted rhythm in the bass to change

the prevailing mood of the music from one of calm to one of menace: **Ex.158.**

From b.531 the combination of Ex.158's dotted rhythm and the intervals of the chord of Ex.144 produces a new melodic figuration which involves the intervals of major third and major second enclosing the central note, C, which is sustained in the bass: **Ex.159.** To describe this as a fugato would be going a little too far; nevertheless, Ex.159 is the basis of a series of imitative entries at bb.540, 551 and 560 - the 'countersubject' merely being the semitonal shake first encountered in Ex.152. The whole of this passage - from b.513 to b.570 - is fairly contained, the general dynamic remaining pianissimo. But a crescendo from b.568 provokes a massive fortissimo reappearance at b.571 of the five-note chord from Ex.144, this time transposed down a semitone and combined with furious rushing scales on the upper strings - derived from b.116.

This dramatic tutti is crowned by reappearances, from b.580, of the forceful melody noted in Ex.150 and which drive the music through to b.609 where the dotted rhythm of Ex.158 is combined with melodic figures based entirely on the work's opening melody: **Ex.160.**

Between b.620 and b.641 the two elements from the opening of this section - quietly menacing dotted rhythms (b.531) and

fierce fortissimo outbursts (b.571) - are dramatically juxtaposed, the violent changes of both texture and dynamic lending the music a highly volatile atmosphere.

Ex.160 proves to be an important generative element from b.650 onwards, where it soon combines both with the important semitonal shake from Ex.152 and with quietly sustained wind chords derived from the basic intervals. The gradual introduction in the woodwind, from b.668, of the dotted rhythm *from* Ex.158 *provokes* a massive crescendo, leading to what is really the final climax of the work (bb.694 to b.800). This climax combines all the elements of the work's final section and, to an extent, also refers to the music of the first section (c.f. bb.119-122/bb.713-723). Also, in its fearsome energy, it generates some new material - most notably a short fanfare-like figure heard on the trumpets at bb.757-9 and bb.775-9.

The tension generated by this passage finally explodes, at b.788, onto an enormous tutti chord marked 'sfff'. The passage relates to the great climax at the end of the first Allegro (see Ex.151) and, like it, the chord is a derivative of the chord of five adjacent semitones in Ex.144. Like that first appearance of the chord, a major third at the top and a major second in the bass enclose a central pitch - in this case C♯ on horns, trumpets, timpani and violas. However, what <u>then</u> happens is a complete surprise: the chord is cut off at b.800 except

for the C# which is sustained, alone and fortissimo, for three bars before transferring to violas and high cellos at b.803. Against this note, the climax appears to shatter into fragments as the three-note ascending scalic figure from Ex.157 is combined on the woodwind with its transposed and inverted form to produce a figure in which the two semitones either side of C# orbit this central note - the closest the work ever comes to presenting Ex.144 in its most basic cluster form: **Ex.161.** Between b.806 and b.827, the four other possible versions of this cluster with C# as a common note are explored: C# as second degree of the chromatic scale, then as the first, fourth and fifth: **Ex.162.** In each version, both a widely-spaced chord and the motivic derivation of Ex.161 are presented, but all the time the sustained C# remains obstinately present in the violas and cellos.

The note has made a diminuendo to mp by b.812 but from there until the end of the work, thirty-two bars later, it remains at this dynamic almost as though intent on 'outstaring' the increasingly fragmentary commentaries which surround it. And it is, quite literally, on a note of ambivalence that this symphony ends.

In many ways No.7 is the strangest of all Simpson's symphonies: structurally unusual and motivically fiercely concentrated, it perhaps contains fewer immediately arresting external characteristics and remains a rather private, even

introspective, work. It is nevertheless as powerful and masterly as anything he has written and, if its dogged concentration makes it less immediately appealing to those unfamiliar with his music, this only serves to increase the affection and esteem in which it is held by many Simpson enthusiasts. Its recent availability in a commercial recording should now make it possible for the work to yield up its secrets to a greater number of listeners.

Note

1. Composer's programme note.

SYMPHONY NO.8 (1981)

The origins of this symphony are rather unusual. In an interview Simpson explained:

> "I felt that the 18th Century knew their own audience - Haydn knew everybody who was going to listen to his symphony next week ... How marvellous to be able to compose when you can see the faces of everybody who is going to hear it, and you can say, 'That will shake them up!' as you are writing it. This is something a modern composer doesn't have. It's either a radio audience, which might as well be non-existent, or a vast sea of faces at the Festival Hall - if he's lucky enough to get a symphony performed there ..."[1].

Simpson's partial solution to this state of affairs was to ask his friend, the painter, Anthony Dorrell to describe the kind of symphony he would like to hear. As Simpson says: "Since we've a lot in common musically and philosophically ... it's not surprising that I don't find it awfully difficult to try and oblige him."[2].

Such a friendly gesture is highly characteristic of Simpson's genial and sociable personality and it is therefore somewhat ironic that the outcome of the collaboration should be a particularly aggressive and forbidding symphony.

Aggression is, to some extent, an inevitable feature of the work: Dorrell's proposed scheme for the symphony involved two equal halves, with two movements in each, the first half

being gradually "invaded" by what Simpson describes as "inimical things". The second half of the symphony was to begin as if in protest at what has gone before, but calm, contemplative thought was gradually to take over, (This was apparently the suggestion of Dorrell's wife, Daphne, who is the joint dedicatee) and this, in turn, was to make way for a fast finale. The finale, says Simpson, is concerned with energy and is, in the composer's words, "not so full of conflict as the rest - just energy."[3].

The orchestra required is the largest Simpson has ever used and the demands made upon its virtuosity and stamina are perhaps more extreme than in any of his other symphonies. The orchestra comprises : three flutes (all doubling piccolos), two oboes, cor anglais, E^b clarinet, two clarinets in A, bass clarinet, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, four trumpets (two in D, two in B^b), four trombones (two tenor, two bass), two tubas, timpani (two players), percussion (side drum, cymbals, tam-tam, bass drum), strings. The orchestra contains the same enlarged brass section as Symphony No.5 but it also includes two new-comers to Simpson's orchestral palette - E^b clarinet and (perhaps surprisingly) bass drum - their appearance remaining unique to this work.

In addition to its forbidding sound world, the Eighth Symphony is, technically, one of Simpson's most complex works and is, perhaps, the most difficult to account for in words. As

with the previous two symphonies, it is the generative power of certain intervals which creates the musical action. The processes used are sophicticated, but the general principle was simply expressed by the composer: "Take two intervals, the second and the fifth; then you have a combination of intervals and you can use them in different ways against each other."[4]. The inevitable result of this kind of approach is likely to be a sense of gradual proliferation of material, and this symphony in particular does give an impression of constantly sprouting new limbs and branches in all directions. However, the roots remain common and Simpson is keen to point out that it is "one of the most concentrated of all my works."[5].

The opening could hardly be simpler: an oscillating major second on the piccolo (a) provides the seed from which the music grows: **Ex.163.**

At the end of the second bar the piccolo (with octave doublings) sustains a D and, against this, a second group of woodwinds plays a rhythmically altered version of (a) a semitone lower than the first. This immediately results in an implied three-semitone cluster with D as the central pitch and, when the two voices begin to shift away from each other in bb.5 and 6, there is a definite sense of the, so far tightly interlocked, intervals fanning outwards (i.e. moving in implied contrary motion). The move of the second group of woodwinds down to an A in bar 5 prompts the entry of the third and fourth

groups who, broadly speaking, imitate the opening bars a fourth lower. As a result, b.6 contains a complex and important pattern of intervals: a minor second between first and second groups (beat 1) becoming a minor third (beats 2 and 3) and a fifth between the outer parts (beat 2). These intervals are clearly audible due to the clarity of the scoring - the fifth particularly so, because the sustained C♯ in the second group creates a momentary A major triad. These intervals form the basis of the exchange at bb.9-11: minor second, perfect fifth, minor third. Additionally, the two halves of each imitative pair mirror each other (e.g. Group 2 in bb.9-10 is an inversion of the intervals in Group 1) and the melodic shape they employ remains basic to the opening - that is to say, two notes orbiting a central pitch. So within the space of just eleven bars, it can be clearly seen that the unassuming opening bars have proliferated to create a complex texture. In fact, a bar-by-bar analysis of this kind would be necessary to do full justice to the extraordinary way in which this symphony grows, but would clearly be beyond the scope of this chapter. Therefore what follows must necessarily be a more concentrated account of how the symphony proceeds.

It has been mentioned, in the description of the opening, that the interval of the minor third is one of the important features and it is this interval which begins a long melodic idea, basically scored for 1st violins, from b.11 (Ex.163). The melody is very active, partly due to the occasional appearance

of brief counterpoints and partly the occasional highlighting by other instruments of certain phrases. But the outline of the melody is quite simple and, if one removes octave displacements, it will be seen to be mainly stepwise in construction: **Ex.164.** When considered in terms of its melodic outline, this melody can clearly be perceived as a derivation of the opening. The melody is a long one and it continues, with some changes of instrumentation (but without repetition) from b.16 to b.63. In fact the melodic continuity proceeds even further, but it is at b.63 that a clear reference to the opening (a sustained A crossed by the notes a semitone either side) creates a natural sense of punctuation. From b.65, an apparently accompanimental idea, derived initially from the stepwise movement of the opening, expands to form a series of prominent fourths and fifths: **Ex.165,** thus introducing an important new intervallic element (although the interval of the fourth was apparent as early as b.5, when the second group of woodwinds descended to an A against the sustained D of the first group).

Very soon the interval of the fifth (or fourth inverted) displaces the, previously dominating, stepwise movement and with it comes a change in mood. From b.88 to b.91, a series of interlocking fifths are sustained which produces a complete twelve-note chord. From this harmonic density emerges a unison F, scored for trumpets, trombones and timpani (with side drum) and they make a menacing crescendo to forte and back to

pianissimo. This passage is interesting to examine because it clearly shows how Simpsons's mind is working concerning the manipulation of two intevals to create something new (it relates very precisely to his comment about using the fifth and second against each other - quoted above). It will be seen that the twelve-note chord built out of fifths is sustained for two beats in b.90. From the way the remaining notes of the chord are added to the first seven in b.90 it is apparent that Simpson is thinking in terms of <u>two</u> chords which combine in b.90 and include all twelve pitches. In bar 91 the two chords move in opposite directions - one transposed up a major second, the other down a major second. This, in turn, creates a ten-note chord at b.91 with only the B^b and F missing - the latter being supplied by the brass in the next bar (the B^b, for some reason, does not appear). The combination of the fifths chords with movement of the chords based on the interval of the major second relates to the opening of the work - as does the fact that the two chords chromatically cross each other at b.91 (c.f. b.3).

The passage just analysed is as dramatic as it is musically significant for it introduces, for the first time, an element of threat into the music. For the time being, however, the threat subsides and, after a slight hesitation, the previous music continues quite blithely - turning into a lively waltz, which combines stepwise motion (both melodically and in terms of the underlying harmony) with the rocking minor thirds

from b.12 of the symphony: **Ex.167.** At this point, the tonality appears to be F (see b.116-117) and, although (as has been mentioned) it is dangerous to over-emphasise clear-cut tonalities in Simpson's later works, it is true that so far in this symphony, F has tended to be the most stable tonal centre - important implications occuring at bb.12-13, b.92ff and now at bb.116-117. These are, however, momentary points of stability within Simpson's, by now familiar, freely flowing tonal current.

Perhaps reinforced by this moment of tonal stability, the waltz continues with infectious good humour (one is reminded of a similar passage in the development of the first movement of Nielsen's Sinfonia Espansiva), but it is abruptly cut short at b.142 by the piercing semitonal dissonance on the horns and pizzicato strings. The semitone immediately forms the basis of an imitative exchange (by inversion) on Ob.1 and Cl.1: **Ex.168.** One of the interesting features of this example is the way in which the intervals gradually expand from a semitone to a perfect fifth - this has harmonic implications here, because subsequent imitative entries at different pitches of Ex.168, with the concluding fifth sustained in the strings, result in a gradual build up of another chord of interlocking fifths. However, its most significant feature is the use of contrary motion, which has important consequences when a metamorphosis of this figure emerges at b.172: **Ex.169.** This moment is extremely important because it has far-reaching consequences

for the rest of the work. The crucial element here is what Simpson describes as "my perverse habit of going up flat and coming down sharp". He continues: "The idea is pinched from what some people say is a misprint in the Hammerklavier sonata, last movement, during the quiet fugue that starts in D major. I hope it's NOT a misprint - it's too marvellous!"[6]. This process of ascending through a flat note and descending through a sharp one was noted at the opening of the second movement of Symphony No.3 and it is a stylistic trait which recurs in later works (e.g. the last movement of Quartet No.10). The fact that Simpson continues to be consciously aware of a technical feature to which many composers nowadays wouldn't give a second thought and the fact that he puts this feature to creative use serve to demonstrate how unusually deep are his links to traditional tonal practice in comparison with most contemporary composers.

The unusual melodic quality of this figure is emphasised by its appearance in imitation with its symmetrical inversion (which, naturally, descends through a sharp, then rises through a flat). The combination of both versions, at b.177, leads to a second menacing brass and timpani entry at b.183 (a fifth lower than the first entry, the sustained B^{b}/D^{b} implying B^{b} minor. From this loud sustained minor third there emerge quietly scurrying triplet quavers on the strings - an accompaniment to an (initially) imitative passage on the woodwind which combines

the rocking thirds idea of b.12 (Ex.163) with the recently introduced procedure of rising through a flat note: **Ex.170.**

This material generates a long stretch of music from b.188 to b.290. This passage is interrupted, however, at bb.209-222 where a duple rhythm aggressively imposes itself across the prevailing 3/4 pattern. These bars (which are motivically derived from the very opening) represent the third, and so far most radical, appearance of contrasting material in the movement. It is, in fact, the first real indication of the character of the second movement (it anticipates the movement's rhythmic character). From the point of view of orchestration bb.232-234 are worthy of note - the doubling of muted horns with double bass harmonics is highly effective and, for Simpson, a most unusual texture. But the effect of such striking orchestration is not simply colouristic - it also serves to emphasise the significance of the interval of the fifth.

From bb.266-290, the texture becomes increasingly active, with the side drum now quietly punctuating the music. Against this, the violas and cellos, doubled by bassoons and oboe (and, later, horn and trombones), play a fairly clear restatement of the symphony's opening melody (see Ex.164). The crescendo generated in the last five bars of this passage is of considerable vehemence and it is abruptly cut off at b.291 by contrasting material based on bb.209-222 and, like that

passage, an anticipation of the second movement. However, instead of being an aggressive interruption this passage is rather quiet, nervous and unsteady - a fact emphasised by the various irregular divisions of the superimposed 3/4 pulse. Also at this point the tempo slightly speeds up - from ♩. = 48 to ♩. = 52 and from here until the end of the movement the incursions of the 2/4 cross rhythm become more frequent.

The long woodwind line beginning at b.301, and continuing to b.326, is of interest because, in addition to being a metamorphosis of Exx.163 and 164, it introduces the practice of adding a syncopated accompanying line (presented here on cor anglais and bass clarinet): **Ex.171.** This is to become a prominent feature of the second movement. Additionally, bb.306-308 further develop the idea of the rocking minor third, noted in Ex.170.

After a mysterious reappearance of the 2/4 cross-rhythm at bb.327-347 (a passage scored for muted brass, woodwind, tremolando strings and suspended cymbal played with metal sticks) the music suddenly flares up at b.348 with a violent derivative of the opening - this time with a sustained A natural in the bass crossed by an A^b and B^b: **Ex.172.** From here until the end of the movement the emotional temperature rises considerably, the whole of the succeeding two hundred or so bars maintaining a fairly consistent fortissimo. The only major exception to this is the passage between bb.386-395 which forms

part of another 2/4 interruption. In this passage, the oscillating minor thirds, which were noted earlier, are developed and intervallically expanded to form perfect fourths. These, set against a development of the symphony's opening on violins, form the basis of the resumption of the conflict at b.396.

It is interesting to note that at the point where the first movement begins to develop aggressively the, hitherto aggressive, 'invasion' of the 2/4 tempo suddenly is reversed - the material at bb.387-395 is distinctly lyrical in character. The movement is not simply a matter of a calm opening being shattered or of a crude representation of, for instance, a peaceful country being invaded by a hostile army. The symphony is more complex than that. Hence the fact that Simpson speaks of the movement being "gradually invaded by contrasting rather than conflicting - elements. They are conflicting because they are so contrasted."[7]. Such a device, however violent the result, requires sensitive handling, because if it is ill-timed the result will be ineffective. Indeed, Simpson says, with specific reference to this symphony: "The important thing is not so much thematic derivations as the control of movement in the work as a whole. The spacing of the climaxes is, as always, very important. Timing is all, as with comedians, though this isn't a very comical piece! I've come to the conclusion that the most important thing in any music is timing."[8]. For 'timing' one can also read 'control of rhythm' or 'handling of

tension and release' and this largely explains the composer's decision to cut out from bb.401-549 a total of thirteen particularly belligerent appearances on brass and percussion of the 2/4 cross-rhythm. In the original version, not only did this passage sound too much like a latter-day 'Battle Symphony', thereby undermining the movement's shattering climax, but it also served to obscure the already very intense contrapuntal development which was continuing in the background.

Much of this section is in four-part polyphony with woodwind doubling a more or less continuous string texture. The material played is a series of highly involved developments of the opening examples, a particularly notable feature being the fanning outwards of intervals from a central point - a detail already noted - which also relates to the prevalence of scalic patterns earlier in the movement: **Ex.173.** Additionally, the texture is frequently highlighted by the trumpets playing isolated rising major seconds, derived from the very first bar, (c.f. bb.474, 478-9, 482-4 etc.) and by menacing semitonal shakes in the bass instruments, derived from a similar figure on the high violins at bb.47-51 (c.f. 485-7, 497-500 etc.) and which, beginning on F/E at b.485, move chromatically downwards on each reappearance thereby creating a chromatically descending bass line which arrives at B^b by the end of the movement. The combination of these elements creates a passage of sustained vehemence which continues for over one hundred and

fifty bars until, with a great crash of percussion at b.549, the movement does not so much 'end' as spill over into the next one.

The second movement is marked 'minaccioso' (menacingly) and, at a fairly brisk 𝅗𝅥 = c.60 it constitutes a kind of scherzo. The 2/4 pulse is, of course, the result of its dramatic appearances during the previous movement. The movement begins softly, after the abrupt cut-off of the first movement's hysterical climax, and it immediately picks up on two details from that movement. Firstly, the way in which a rocking minor third was extended to a perfect fourth (c.f. bb.303, 387 etc.) is developed - this time expanding further to produce an augmented fourth: **Ex.174.** Secondly, this line is 'shadowed' by another line, in a manner anticipated in Ex.171. Both of these elements are used extensively at the beginning of this movement - particularly the former, which is highly unusual for Simpson; the tritone is not a very prevalent interval in his melodic writing **Ex.175** shows how the music combines this interval with the contrary motion scalic pattern which has grown from the first movement. The result of such extensive use of the tritone is a long stretch of music with no real sense of tonal centre. Even though it is inappropriate to talk of 'keys' in these later Simpson symphonies in the way that one could in the earlier ones, the overall effect is nevertheless one of extremely rapidly moving tonal allusions - the speed with which they change creating much of the music's momentum. The use of the

tritone during this passage results in a kind of stasis and a sense of expectancy which stands in marked contrast to what has immediately preceded it.

Ex.174 has been shown to have grown out of the material of the first movement. There are also other close links with that movement - particularly with the important chromatic 'crossing' of a central pitch referred to at the very opening. This has two important consequences: firstly, as it is related to the ostinato pattern established at the opening of the second movement, it serves to create a new, and more complex, ostinato figuration: **Ex.176.** The second important result is the realization of the potential of the four-semitone cluster which this idea naturally implies: **Ex.177** (marked 'x'). In this example, the movement, in bb.617-19, of the oboe melody and of its inversion in the violas against a sustained semitone in the violins also relates to the already mentioned procedure of intervals 'fanning out' from a central point. A further unifying feature of the oboe melody is that not only is it built mainly out of major seconds, thus relating it to the opening of the symphony, but the prominent tritone outline (bb.618-19) can be perceived as a more thematically significant outcome of that interval, which appeared so obsessively at the movement's opening. The relationship of this melody to the symphony's opening is itself significant because it is to recur three more times in the course of this movement, always as a gentle and lyrical reaction to the menacing music which

surrounds it. Apart from its first reappearance, the melody becomes progressively shorter and the interruptions to it more violent in direct reflection of the way that the appearances of the cross-rhythms in the first movement became progressively more belligerent.

So the inexorable, indeed brutal, progress of this movement is easy to follow as it builds aggressively, sweeping aside the increasingly poignant appearances of Ex.177 with more and more ferocious outbursts. It is basically a kind of march which is activated, within a regular two-beat pulse, by a variety of means. The ostinati from the movement's opening are transformed by rhythmic decorations: **Ex.178**, whilst the sense of action is provided by long lines of vigorous quaver movement - themselves a distant relation to the opening of the movement: **Ex.179**. (This last example becomes something of a stylistic trait, recurring in a very similar manner in both the Ninth and Tenth Symphonies.)

As has been mentioned, the prominence of the interval of the tritone keeps the tonal centre of the music quite ambiguous and this is true for much of the movement. In contrast to this, the appearances of Ex.177 provide respite not only by their contrasting dynamic level but also by the strong tonal allusions created by bb.619-621 of that example. That is not to say that tonal implications are entirely lacking from the aggressive music of this movement. Indeed, the last violent

interruption of Ex.177, at b.828. suggests B^b minor by sustaining a B^b/D^b minor third in the brass - a gesture anticipated as early as b.183 of the first movement. In this case, however, the interval is joined two bars later by the semitone which it encloses (C/B) and which appears in the extreme treble and bass either side of the central minor third. This arrangement is reminiscent of the way the five-note 'cluster' was spaced at the opening of Symphony No.7. It is also combined with the, already mentioned, procedure of making intervals 'fan' outwards - a procedure more fully explored in Symphony No.9: **Ex.180.**

This example illustrates the beginning of the final tutti of this movement - a passage of sustained vehemence lasting some one hundred bars. During this enormous tutti, long held notes in the strings and woodwind, which basically move stepwise, are combined with versions of the oscillating intervals noted in Exx.170 and 171 on the brass (bb.857 etc.) and the whole texture is reinforced by powerful tam-tam and timpani interjections. The passage reaches a peak of violence at b.928 with a grinding G^b/F dissonance on brass and high woodwind. It is something of a shock when, three bars later, the din suddenly subsides, to leave the 1st violins quietly repeating crotchet E octaves as if completely impervious to the barrage of sound which has just preceded them. These quietly ticking E's gradually move down through the octaves to a low E, against which woodwind and muted brass play short staccato

phrases of repeated quavers based both on Ex.179 and on the, by now all-important, cluster formation of four adjacent semitones. This passage, with its fragmentary phrases on wind pitted against a mysteriously obstinate single note, is strikingly reminiscent of the end of Symphony No.7 - though, in this case, the impression is not so much that of something 'staring us in the face' as of the movement stalking off into the distance and perhaps continuing to unleash its destructive power out of earshot. This extremely graphic impression is reinforced by the fact that there is no slowing down in tempo - all that remains in the final bars are the cellos playing their low E in even crotchets (doubled by a sustained E in the basses) with the texture punctuated by the occasional dull thud on the bass drum.

A significant feature of the second movement was the fact that each appearance of the oboe melody (Ex.177) was at the same pitch. This fact relates to the melody's failure to establish itself as a possible alternative to the aggression which surrounds it and to its gradually being overwhelmed by hostile elements. Taken in the context of the work as a whole, together with its quasi-programmatic background, this idea will be seen to be far from fanciful. The concept which it embodies was expounded by the composer as early as 1971: "One of the worst features of humanity - perhaps <u>the</u> worst, is the inertia with which the vast majority allows the aggressions of the power-hungry minority to dominate."[9]. This observation and its

consequences, as seen by a "ferociously anti-pessimist composer" are basic to the way the rest of this work proceeds.

The third movement follows the only break in the work. It is, in the composer's words, "very intense in it's reaction to all of this [i.e. what has preceded it], a sort of severe passion."[10]. The 'passion' involved is the passion of protest and can be seen as the positive, or at least active, alternative to the inert oboe melody of the second movement. While in no way attempting to 'pigeonhole' this work as being in some way political, it is, in this context, worth noting Simpson's passionate commitment to the peace movement. The great power of this symphony's slow movement is clearly borne of the same human involvement which makes Simpson such an eloquent advocate of peaceful protest as the only sane response to the present state of the world. The parallel does not stop with the emotional nature of this movement; it affects its very substance, because Simpson employs what is, for him, perhaps the most organic of forms (and, by extension, the antithesis to the destructive elements of the second movement) - fugue.

This was the largest fugue in Simpson's symphonic output at the time of its composition (though it is perhaps surpassed in Symphony No.9) and its subject is germane to the opening of the symphony, not only in its largely stepwise movement with octave displacements (c.f. Ex.164), but in its tendency to rise through a flat note and descend through a sharp one: **Ex.181**

(c.f. bb.1 and 3). The fugue is in four voices, entering in descending order, with each entry a major sixth below the last. Though very slow, the fugue is extremely intense and energetic - the demisemiquaver figurations of the countersubject ('x') providing a good deal of rhythmic impetus - and it employs a procedure found in a number of fugal passages in Simpson's more recent works: that of gradual metamorphosis of the fugue subject itself. Indeed, after the exposition, the subject never reappears in its original form (an even larger example of this is to be found in the String Quartet No.9).

The music proceeds dramatically: intense and loud passages of three- or four-part polyphony, scored for the whole orchestra, are sharply contrasted with much more gentle, peaceful episodes (see bb.27, 60, 91, 124). It will immediately be noticed that, as these quiet episodes become gradually longer, the tutti passages get progressively shorter. Not only does this idea reverse the formal process of the second movement but it also finds an interesting parallel in the slow movement of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto - the supposed depiction of 'Orpheus taming the Furies'. Simpson (whether consciously influenced or not) provides what is perhaps a more realistic alternative: the 'Furies' are here not so much tamed as outfaced. There is no gradual relaxation of intensity in the tutti passages, as there is in Beethoven's equivalent, but simply an increasing concentration of quiet, contemplative thought.

In considering the transformations of the fugue subject, it is important to remember the broadly scalic motion as well as the octave displacements in its second bar. **Ex.182** gives a number of derivations of the subject. In fact, these thematic derivations are not treated in a strictly fugal manner - in this sense only the opening passage adheres to such a pattern. Nevertheless, it is correct to refer to the entire movement as a fugue because it is, throughout, a concentrated contrapuntal study of the material of the fugal exposition. Simpson is therefore expanding the understanding of what this form can contain in much the same way that he redefines the idea of canonic writing in the Fifth Symphony.

The presentations of the contrasting episodes are extremely abrupt - the tutti is sharply cut off to reveal a total change of texture and dynamic. The episodes are, however, thematically related to the opening of the movement, being based on a diminuted version of the subject: **Ex.183.** This passage is also related to the second movement in its use of a four-note chromatic cluster at the beginning of the example which fans outwards to produce a chord of four adjacent tones at the end of the first complete bar. This idea is later extended to form the basis of a gravely beautiful passage at first centred around F# major/minor and scored for the cellos divided into four parts and piccolo in its low register: **Ex.184.**

After the final tutti outburst has ended, at b.123, the quiet, contemplative music at last comes to dominate and it is in this passage that the music gradually becomes more active. This is achieved by the introduction of small decorations to the lines which are derived from the movement's countersubject (see Ex.181x): **Ex.185.** The decorations come to predominate, so much so that, at b.146, they form the basis of a new tempo: **Ex.186.** The transition into the fast tempo is interesting to examine. It is clear that the flute configuration grows out of the 2nd violin triplets in the previous bar. What is less immediately obvious is that this bar presents yet another manifestation of the all-important idea of the four-note semitonal cluster 'fanning' outwards. The third quaver beat of b.145 contains the notes E^b (vln.II), E (celli), F (horns) and G^b (vln.I). They are distributed over more than three octaves with the outer notes of the cluster (G^b and E^b) forming a minor third at the top. On the fifth and sixth quavers of the bar, these notes move, respectively, up and down a tone whilst the 'central' notes remain stationary (a process anticipated at b.70 - Ex.184). The resultant A^b/D^b fifth in the violins is itself important, because this interval featured very prominently in the first movement. In this symphony, Simpson does not necessarily use all his basic material in all the movements (for example, the practice of ascending through a flat note and descending through a sharp one was absent from the second movement). But in the finale, the interval of the

fifth reappears and becomes by far the most important element of the movement.

Simpson's explanation of this movement's formidable energy is that "[the third movement] gradually gives way to calmer elements, and when the thing has become calm enough then there's room for energy in a finale, with some positive action in it, which is not so full of conflict as the rest: just energy - a feeling that now that we have thought things out, now we've got some strength back."[11]. Simpson stresses that the finale is not some kind of triumphant resolution of the conflicts in the rest of the work. Instead it is just a representation of energy which "can be used for whatever purpose you like - destructive, constructive or whatever. It simply means that after a certain amount of clashing of elements in this symphony, there comes a point when these clashes are resolved into what you might call an undirectional energy which is canalised, which is positive in that sense."[12]. This may be seen as an unusually ambiguous statement from a composer generally renowned for the clarity with which he discusses his own music. But the point he is trying to make is one essentially unfamiliar to listeners brought up on a diet of mainly nineteenth-century repertoire in which conflict leads to either triumphant resolution or tragedy/resignation. But if the music rejects such emotive labelling then it is, nevertheless, far from being the work of a musical automaton, devoid of emotion and lacking spontineity. Simpson points out: "I don't

go along with Stravinsky who said that music can express only itself; I think it is much too complex for that... I don't know what I am expressing when I compose. I know that there is something coming out of me, and I know it must be human because I presume I am human, and I know that sometimes it appeals to other people and sometimes it doesn't."[13].

The energy of the finale is attained gradually, the new tempo, at b.146, forming a transition of thirteen bars to the finale proper. When the finale does begin, at b.159, the tempo increases still further - from $\dot{\mathrm{d}}.$ = c.72 to $\dot{\mathrm{d}}.$ = c.88 - and this tempo is largely retained, with some metric modulations, for the entire movement. In some ways it is the most complex of Simpson's 'finales' and it would certainly appear to be the most episodic. However, unity, and to some extent, simplicity of outline are maintained by dividing the movement into large spans, one of which reworks the material of its opeining section in a way which will presently be described.

The long crescendo at the opening takes up the reintroduction of the interval of the fifth (heard at b.146) and, from b.183 to b.194, the bass line consists of an enormous chain of descending fifths which, beginning on D, moves through two complete cycles of fifths before returning to its first note now heard as the bass of a huge chord spread across the entire orchestra: **Ex.187.** This chord, which contains five different pitches, can be viewed in three ways - each

instructive in relation to the finale as a whole: a) it can be seen as a chord of superimposed fifths with the third note (E) missing; b) it can be seen as a 'ninths' chord in first inversion; and c) its intervals can be broken down into a perfect fourth (relating it to the preceding fifths) with two major thirds, one of them interlocking with the fourth. In fact, the major third (often in combination with the fifth) also proves to be a highly important element in the movement.

Rhythmically, the music is driven along by the almost constant use of triplet quavers - this gives rise to long, athletic lines such as the one beginning at b.195: **Ex.188.** This idea is then subject to two variations, (c.f. bb.206, 218) both of which are preceded by the chord shown at Ex.187. The chord is transposed on each appearance, having as its bass note: E^b (b.205), F (b.217), D^b (b.235), F (b.238), A (b.239), D^b (b.241). The final appearance of the chord 'resolves' onto a sustained E^b/B^b fifth on the horns combined with an F#/G clash on the oboes which at once confirms E^b as an area of tonal stability and, at the same time makes the major/minor modality ambiguous. Against this chord the violins begin a passage of freely inverted two-part writing which combines the furious quaver activity with the now familiar practice of ascending through a flat note and descending through a sharp one: **Ex.189.** This material spreads through the strings between b.242 and b.265 with isolated beats of the constant quaver activity occasionally highlighted by woodwind or trumpets. The enormous

climactic chord, at b.266, relates to Ex.187 in being composed exclusively from interlocking fifths, in this case B, F♯, C♯, A^b, E^b, B^b, F, and the same is true of the chords in bb.269 and 271 (which have as their bass notes B^b and G respectively). Between them, the fifth forms a brief melodic figure: **Ex.190.**

Not only does this idea prove to be melodically important but its rhythmic significance is immediately felt in the contrasting quiet episode, which begins at b.273. Here, against a quaver ostinato derived from Ex.189 and initially on the strings, a woodwind idea made up from minor thirds and the duplet rhythm of Ex.190 provides contrasting material: **Ex.191.** This material, together with periodic fortissimo outbursts of Ex.190 on the violins, forms the basis of the mainly quiet passage from b.273 to b.326. An important thematic derivation of Ex.190 occurs at bb.291-297 in which the characteristic descending fifths figure combines with elements of Exx.189 and 191: **Ex.192.**

Throughout the very gradual crescendo which occurs from b.338 to b.364 Ex.190 proves to be the dominating force. Its 'dominant to tonic' implication results in a strong tonal reference on each appearance and this is further enhanced by the prominent use of the major third as an additional melodic element: **Ex.193.** There is naturally a strong pull towards B major in the second and third bars of the previous example and a similar effect occurs on each reappearance of the figure

(b.353, A^b major; b.357, D major; b.360, A major; b.367, B major; b.369, E^b major). The last two appearances of Ex.193 provoke a huge climactic tutti, at which point there is an apparent reference to the opening of the movement (c.f. bb.166-172, brass / bb.375-380).[14].

In fact, the allusion goes much deeper than this because at this point Simpson begins what is in effect a huge variation on the music heard up to this point. The variation is by no means a strictly bar-by-bar reworking of the previous material but it does follow a broad harmonic/melodic outline quite clearly and, perhaps more importantly, the distribution of the main climaxes. The variation runs from b.375 to b.669 and it reworks b.166 to b.370 and although the tonal implications are constantly different to the original, some very clear correspondences can be made: b.195 c.f. b.395 (here the same material appears a tone higher, moving the implied tonal centre from C to D); b.205 c.f. b.409; b.229 c.f. b.443 (this material is given greater weight in the variation, due to the change of metre to 9/8 which inevitably lends it a sense of formal division. The material is now presented a fourth lower, around G - the key in which the work eventually ends); b.242 c.f. b.456; b.272 c.f. b.493 (the earlier contrasting material now becomes the basis of a new section and a new tempo. The passage is a 3/4 'Beethoven' scherzo and its $\dot{d}\cdot$ pulse basically relates to the $\dot{d}\cdot\ \dot{d}\cdot$ of the previous section. However, in his

revision of the work Simpson added a 'piu mosso' increasing the tempo to ♩. = 120); b.341 c.f. b.623; b.353 c.f. b.651.

Naturally, there are innumerable small details which are changed in this variation as well as some quite major alterations - the most notable of which is the wild melody at bb.580-594, whose shrill scoring for unison woodwind is (unusually, for Simpson) quite reminiscent of Shostakovich. Also, the E^b clarinet melody at b.603 does not correspond to what should be an equivalent at b.338 but to an idea first heard at b.345-6 (Ex.193) - the common factor between the ideas is that of rising through a flat note and descending through a sharp note: **Ex.194.**

The tempo changes at b.443 and b.493 inevitably form major structural divisions. However, the deeper continuity of the large variation just described is undisturbed, thus creating a fascinating combination of two entirely different structural processes operating simultaneously.

A further change of tempo is effected at b.704 where a new 3/4 section begins at exactly half the speed of the preceding one. It is initially based on the rising scalic figure introduced at the beginning of the movement (b.196 - see Ex.188) and it also introduces further reworking of previous material. For example, Ex.194 (itself related to Ex.188) is the basis of the woodwind/brass exchange at b.721-730. The cycle of

descending fifths, from the movement's opening, returns between bb.766-769, against a whirlwind of accompanying string triplets, and expands the idea still further, taking in over two and a half cycles of fifths - from F# to F natural - if one counts the V-I 'resolution' at b.810. The figure at b.810 is a reference to b.342 (Ex.193) and reference to the passage from b.342 to b.372 continues from b.810 to b.873.

The furious final pages of the symphony are quite extraordinary: against increasingly wild triplet activity on the strings, the brass and woodwind run through no less than four and a half cycles of descending fifths - that is to say, now fewer than fifty-three interlocking fifths without any deviation from this scheme (bb.874-914). In the hands of a lesser composer the effect would be tedious; Simpson, however, has by now generated such energy in this finale that the effect is breathtaking - a remarkably accurate musical equivalent of a dynamo, generating energy from momentum. Indeed, the music threatens to become trapped inside the seemingly unstoppable force and the only solution is to "switch it off". As Simpson says, "It doesn't end with a blazing chorale or anything like that... it ends with energy which finally comes to a point when it has got to stop some time or other."[15]. To effect this, the music breaks its cycle of fifths at b.915 and seizes on a fifth entirely out of sequence - C/G. A descending/ascending figure which stretches across three and a half octaves (bb.921-927) threatens to start the whole cycle of fifths again and it is

with the intervention of that other important interval, the major third, that the music comes to an abrupt, ferocious close, seizing on G as the key in which to stop: **Ex.195.**

Symphony No.8 is the most uncompromising of Simpson's symphonies. It hardly relaxes for a second and makes enormous demands on the listener's concentration and the orchestra's stamina. It is perhaps unsurprising that, at the time of writing, it is the one most in need of a really fine performance. When this eventually happens it should be much clearer to listeners just how powerful and consistently impressive it is.

Notes

1. Conversation with Michael Oliver. Radio 3, Music Weekly, 1st March 1981. Transcribed in 'Tonic' Vol.1 No.3.
2. ibid.
3. Conversation with Michael Oliver. Radio 3, Music Weekly, 6th November 1982. Transcribed in 'Tonic' Vol.2 No.1.
4. ibid.
5. Letter to author.
6. Letter to author. (The passage mentioned occurs at b.252 in the finale of the 'Hammerklavier'.)
7. Conversation with Michael Oliver. Radio 3, Music Weekly, 6th November 1982. Transcribed in 'Tonic' Vol.2 No.1
8. Letter to author.
9. "The ferociously anti-pessimist composer". Radio 3, 12th May 1971. Published in 'The Listener' as 'Against Lipsius".
10. Conversation with Michael Oliver. Radio 3, Music Weekly, 6th November 1982. Transcribed in 'Tonic' Vol.2 No.1.
11. ibid.
12. ibid.
13. ibid.
14. In 1983 Simpson revised the opening of this movement. In the previous version, the fortissimo tutti (subsequently drastically altered) made the correspondence much more obvious.
15. See note 10.

SYMPHONY NO.9 (1985-86)

The Ninth is perhaps Simpson's most ambitious symphony to date. It is in a single movement lasting some fifty minutes and is basically in a single tempo throughout, the quick scherzo section deriving the speed of its crotchets from the triplets at the work's very opening. Lionel Pike describes the symphony as "the largest piece ever written in a single tempo", which is not quite accurate - 'minimalist' composers such as Reich and Riley have written longer works in a single tempo - but it is probably the longest symphonic work in a single tempo and it does give some idea of the scale of the achievement.

The concern with building an entire symphony from one basic tempo relates the Ninth to the First Symphony - though in other respects, most notably that of size, this work is quite different.

One of the most striking new features of Symphony No.9 is its pervading sense of calm - in contrast to the often manic activity of the previous symphonies - and the work is notable for containing a much higher proportion of slow music than any of its predecessors. Although a new element of his symphonies, this feature can be traced back about three years before this symphony to the Ninth String Quartet (1982) whose last three variations formed an extended slow section of rapt contemplation in a manner quite unlike any of Simpson's earlier

music. This particular concern is developed in the Tenth Quartet (1984), subtitled "For Peace" and concerned "with the condition of peace, which excludes aggression but not strong feeling."[1].

This last remark could apply equally well to the Ninth Symphony which though as intense and impassioned as any of Simpson's other works (and, if anything, more concentrated) contains no music which could be described as aggressive and is ultimately dominated by a profound sense of tranquility. One of the means by which calm is achieved is by a certain deliberation of movement which, Simpson says, "may sometimes suggest Bruckner" and he goes on to comment that in writing this piece he was, for the first time, consciously aware of that composer's influence. Tributes to other composers also appear: Beethoven in the scherzo section, Sibelius in the way the scherzo grows out of the symphony's slow opening (and perhaps relating to the first movement of Sibelius' Fifth Symphony) and, above all, Bach. As with all of Simpson's music, the Ninth contains a wealth of contrapuntal invention, but the first section is particularly indebted to Bach as it is treated rather in the manner of a chorale-prelude - a polyphonic texture punctuated periodically by chorale-like statements in the brass.

The orchestra is a standard one: triple woodwind (2+1 in each case); 4.3.3.1.; timpani (a virtuoso part compensating for the absence of any percussion); strings.

Simpson is justifiably proud of the fact that every bar of this huge work is derived from the first eight bars: **Ex.196.** The intervals created by the flute and oboe lines produce a recognisable harmonic progression based on the idea of the intervals tending to gradually 'fan' outwards (from the major second in b.3 to the octave in b.9) - this technique featured prominently in the Eighth Symphony. When examined in detail, the passage can be seen as comprising two such progressions, the first running to the perfect fourth in bb.5&6 and the second running from the minor third in b.7 to the octave in b.9. The only discrepancy in the smoothness of the overall progression occurs in bb.6-7 where a major third contracts to a minor third by the chromatic upward movement on the oboe (B to C) against a sustained D# on the flute: **Ex.197.** This reversal of the general principle of gradually expanding intervals is to prove deeply significant.

The whole of this progression is texturally enriched by decoration in the 1st and 2nd violins, and the passage is played over continuous D# quaver triplets in the basses until the arrival on an octave G# at b.9 where the basses also move to a G#. This naturally means that the bass line has moved up a perfect fourth and created a V-I cadential feeling and this is

also of great importance for it initiates a chain of pedal-points in rising fourths which cover all twelve pitches between the opening and b.40. Each change of pedal accompanies some kind of melodic derivative of Ex.196 which always preserves the idea of intervals fanning outwards: **Ex.198.**

The resulting sense of a continuous chain of cadences produces a feeling of gradually increasing tension which is heightened by the increasing frequency in the changes of pedal-point as the passage progresses and by a gradual crescendo until, with the return to D# (E^b) at b.40, the music reaches the first climactic point.

The passage just described can be perceived as an introduction to the work. However, it is far more than that because in these forty bars the symphony is not merely 'introduced' but the basic material of every aspect of the work - melodic, harmonic, tonal, rhythmic and structural - is revealed.

Structurally, the passage is enormously significant because it traverses twelve tonal planes based on rising fourths and, in expanded form, this proves to be an important feature of the symphony. This particular aspect can be seen in the ensuing passage, from b.41 onwards, in which tonal centres of successively rising fourths reinforce the main structural divisions. The music is built out of contrapuntal developments

of Ex.196 punctuated by imposing statements of a chorale-like idea, each statement a fourth higher than the last. The 'chorale' can also be clearly perceived as another derivation of the opening, rather in the manner of the melodies at Ex.198: **Ex.199.**

The entries of the 'chorale' at bb.93, 119, 142, 174, 204, 211 etc. each begin a fourth higher than the previous one. It is misleading to think of each entry as being 'in' any particular key - the nature of the intervallic movement tends to preclude that. Nevertheless, a sense of gradually rising tonal centres is strongly implied due to its careful preparation in the course of the symphony's first forty bars.

But these chorale statements are just the backbone of the music - as in a Baroque chorale-prelude; or, to use a metaphor more appropriate to the great size of this symphony, they are like buttresses round a cathedral. Supported by them is a wealth of detail and invention. This detail is itself a development of the opening material as can be seen from the idea immediately following the introduction: **Ex.200.** Here the melody on violins and woodwind takes the development of the opening intervals as its point of departure whilst the accompanying scale, based on tones and semitones, is derived from the first three intervals of the symphony's opening idea. The figure is treated fugally, with entries occurring at b.48 and b.55. These are successively a fourth higher in pitch,

revealing another aspect of the work's construction - the procedure of using rising fourths to delineate the structure does not just relate to the brass interjections but also to the material on a more concentrated time-scale. Thus, it becomes apparent that the material contained in Ex.196 is being used on more than one level simultaneously. Of course, successive entries at the fourth are hardly uncommon in fugal writing (and this symphony is filled with fugato passages to an even greater extent than its predecessors) but they also abound throughout the work in non-fugal contexts. For example, the chord on woodwind and horns at b.70 is the result of the gradual superimposition of fourths covering eight pitches.

Rhythm is organised in a way that relates to that of key centres - there are a number of speeds operating simultaneously. At the deepest level the 'chorale' statements, in long notes, regulate the large-scale rhythm of the first section whilst the unchanging 3/2 beat at $\mathbf{d}$ = 60 controls the pulse and what the composer describes as "the deliberation of movement". However, above this, the rhythm is active and changeable, providing variety and regulating melodic ebb and flow.

An important moment, from the point of view of rhythmic development, is the introduction of a repeated quaver pattern at b.84 onwards: **Ex.201.** This is important for two reasons: firstly, it introduces a new level of rhythmic activity, in

contrast to the preceding slow, quiet passage, but within the same overall tempo. Secondly, it accompanies the first appearance of the chorale-like material in the lower strings (after this particular statement it is transferred to the brass) and the resulting combination of slow-moving chorale background and much more rhythmically active foreground clearly relates the music to the convention of the Baroque Chorale-Prelude.

It will be apparent that 'rhythm' is here perceived not just in the narrowly limiting (and all too commonly misunderstood) sense of the bar-to-bar organisation of crotchets and quavers, but in the broader sense of the large-scale control of tension and release, movement and stasis, which provides the directional force behind real symphonic music. To achieve this kind of rhythm requires the control of all compositional elements, including harmony and counterpoint, as well as dynamic and textural contrast. It is these last two elements which create much of the large-scale momentum of the symphony's opening section.

The loud statements of the 'chorale' are played by the full orchestra and these contrast sharply with the contrapuntal developments which separate them. It is appropriate to term these quieter, more delicately scored passages 'developments' because they pursue a kind of development which, though clearly related to the basic material along with everything else in the

symphony, remains quite independent of its imposing surroundings.

This is perhaps best illustrated by comparison of the openings of the first three of these passages: **Ex.202.** These examples (which incidentally demonstrate the way in which tonal centres move in successively rising fourths) show the gradual thematic evolution of an idea which can be traced back to bb.4&5 of the symphony. The continuity of this development can easily be seen by comparison of the second and third examples, but between these passages comes the third statement of the 'chorale' which is itself undergoing gradual development. The resultant structural process is quite sophisticated and, more importantly, quite different from any other procedure in Simpson's symphonies.

The transition between these two differentiated types of material is, in the early stages, quite abrupt, the 'chorales' generally introduced by a sudden crescendo accompanied by a minatory timpani roll. The transition into the quiet episodes is generally achieved by a sudden and rapid diminuendo along with a radical reduction in scoring. The resultant abruptness of expression is highly reminiscent of Bruckner, though, like that composer, abruptness in no way implies discontinuity.

The pattern of alternating 'chorales' and contrapuntal developments is broken from b.216 where a chain of descending

fifths (naturally derived from the basic pattern of ascending fourths and similarly widely used in the work) leads to a mysterious passage in which three statements of the chorale appear softly in the lower strings, accompanied by ethereal high tremolandi in the violins. These statements are not separated by contrapuntal developments and it is only after the third statement that a fugal development of Ex.201 emerges to give the music renewed impetus: **Ex.203.** The countersubject is of particular interest: its descending whole-tone scalic pattern is an inversion of part of the bass-line in Ex.200 and it plays an increasingly prominent part in the long build-up of tension between b.255 and b.305. Here, the figure alternates with the 'chorale' material on the brass against a continuous stream of quavers (from Ex.203) which themselves alternate between woodwind and strings. This is combined with a gradual crescendo so that a powerful sense of climax is achieved. However, the full implications of this build-up are forestalled at b.306 when the music suddenly takes a somewhat unexpected turn.

The time-signature changes to 2/2 (the first of only four time-signature changes in the entire work) and a new rhythmic figure is introduced which, combined with the effects of textural and, particularly, dynamic contrast, clearly relates the music to a passage in the first movement of Bruckner's Third Symphony: **Ex.204.** Simpson describes the passage as "an allusion" and also as "a tribute" and Lionel Pike points out

that "he pays musical homage by alluding to (not quoting!) him". However, two elements of this passage are quite clearly related to what has gone before: firstly, the basic shape of the intervals at Ex.204 is related to Ex.196 and, secondly, the abruptly contrasted ff/pp dynamics are a natural outcome of the sharply defined loud and soft passages in the early stages of the 'chorale-prelude'.

At the beginning of this section the proportions of the ff/pp alternations vary considerably, ranging from alternating bars of ff and pp (bb.320-323 where the brass employ Ex.197 very prominently) to quite substantial passages at a single dynamic level. There are also a number of very short episodes in which the ostinato rhythm is temporarily omitted and contrasting material is presented based on the descending fifths noted at bb.216-217 (see bb.341-2, bb. 347-351, 357-359, 364-365).

From b.383 to b.405 the rhythmic ostinato is combined with a derivative of the scalic bass-line of Ex.200 (this time in its original ascending form) over a series of three pedal-points on G, E and D. These scales are <u>almost</u> alternating semitone/tone eight-note scales, but in each one Simpson introduces a change to the basic pattern (e.g. in the first two scales the step between the fifth and sixth degrees is increased from a semitone to a tone) so that as the scale rises to the octave above its starting note it actually 'overshoots'

that note by a semitone. Not only does this maintain the tension with impressive consistency but it also relates the music to the symphony's very opening, where a sustained note is crossed by the notes a semitone either side (c.f. b.3/bb.390-391).

The outcome of this is a passage of sustained climactic intensity (bb.406-435) where the time-signature returns to 3/2 with the reintroduction of a sustained E^b in triplet quavers (but this time on the timpani and ff) conveys the sense of dramatic restatement of the work's opening. This is emphasised by the fact that the music once again runs through a complete cycle of fourths - the changes occurring with increasing frequency. When the twelfth note (B^b) is reached (bb.429-435) the seemingly inevitable return to E^b is sidestepped in a similar manner to b.41 and the symphony's scherzo bursts out of the triplet rhythm.

The scherzo is marked 'molto vivace' and is in a one-in-a-bar 3/4 metre similar to many of Beethoven's symphonic scherzi and to that of Simpson's Fourth Symphony. The basic crotchet pulse is equal to that of the triplets in the previous section so that, despite the new tempo, the overall pulse could be said to be unchanged.

The scherzo provides contrast not only in terms of tempo but also texturally, possessing a lightness of touch and a

playfulness which both contrasts with the weighty music which surrounds it and also relates it to the scherzos of works such as the Eighth and Tenth Quartets.

Two important ideas appear in the first few bars: 1) a tiny descending scale with an ascending anacrusis of two quavers: **Ex.205**; and 2) a twelve-note chord built entirely out of superimposed fourths - a harmonic manifestation of the interval which provides the structural point of departure for the rest of the work: **Ex.206.** The two elements are soon combined in a series of imitative entries with the upbeat to Ex.205 entering at successively lower fourths and always sustaining the last note to create a chord of fourths (see bb.471-475). Ex.205 itself proves to be capable of transformation - for example at b.462-465 where it retains its anacrusis but the descending scale which follows turns into a series of descending fourths. This capacity for metamorphosis proves to be significant as the scherzo unfolds and a descending arpeggio is introduced - a natural extension of Ex.205: **Ex.207.**

The rest of the material is dominated by a greatly activated version of Ex.196 which first appears in the strings in a passage reminiscent of the opening of the scherzo of Beethoven's Eroica Symphony: **Ex.208.** This passage relates to Ex.196 not only in terms of the 'wedge-shaped' outline of its constituent intervals but also due to the sustaining of a

single pitch (G#) against this activity. Additionally, the passage moves downwards by a fourth and when another sustained note (D#) is added at b.706 the strings repeat the same figure as before, this time a fourth lower. In this way the passage continues with the woodwind gradually building up a twelve-note chord of superimposed fourths whilst the strings obsessively reiterate the figure derived from Ex.196. Each entry of a sustained note in the woodwind is preceded by Ex.207, whose interjections become more forceful as the dynamic increases and the durations of the statements of Ex.208 become progressively shorter (by one bar each time). The result of this increase in tension and dissonance is a brief climax at (bb.837-839) based on Ex.197, before the music reverts to its original rapid activity and generally quiet dynamic punctuated by sudden outbursts of Ex.205.

Three important features emerge during the later stretches of this comparitively brief scherzo (some six and a half minutes out of a total of about forty-eight minutes). The first feature is the prominent use of pedal-points as the music becomes more dramatic. From b.917 to b.956 the music moves through a series of three chromatically rising pedal-points and the activity becomes correspondingly more intense. The second important element is the increasingly prominent use of repeated notes. These derive from the very opening bar of the scherzo (and ultimately from the opening of the symphony) but their use becomes gradually more obsessive and forceful as the general

level of activity becomes greater. The third important feature occurs at b.1106 where a slower tempo is superimposed by the brass on the rapid activity of the rest of the orchestra. The effect is as though one of the 'chorales' from earlier in the symphony had somehow strayed into the scherzo: **Ex.209.**

The immediate consequence of the reintroduction of slower music at the climax of the scherzo is that the slow tempo re-establishes itself and the second of the work's three main climaxes occurs at b.1210 simultaneous with the reversion to the tempo and time-signature of the symphony's opening 'Maestoso': **Ex.210.** The powerful chords on brass and low woodwind derive from Ex.197 and, as the climax is discharged through a series of descending fifths in the bass (bb.1222-4) the music sinks down to a sustained low A in the cellos and basses - a reference to the opening of the work but now at the furthest possible remove, tonally speaking, from the opening D♯.

At this point it may be said that the symphony's second half begins - it is, in fact, just over half way through the work. However, despite the fact that from here to the end contains the longest completely unbroken stretch of music, it is most likely to strike the ear as a complementary section to the one up to b.435 (it is, in fact, only slightly longer). In this way, the scherzo is perceived as being absolutely central to the work.

The section begins with a long, contemplative fugue, the first sixty-one bars scored only for violins, violas and cellos. The fugue itself begins high on the 1st violins and, from its fourth bar onwards, the intervals tend to contract inwards thereby reversing the process of the work's opening: **Ex.211.** It is accompanied by a bass-line which moves upwards and which in fact continues to do so during the statement of the fugal answer, thus refering to another important feature of the symphony - the preponderance of scalic figures.

Each entry of the fugue subject appears a semitone below the last (in the case of the first three entries these are each displaced by an octave) and, characteristically, the subject undergoes transformation as it proceeds (see bb.1277-1280, vln.II).

Simpson points out in his programme note that the concept of a reversal (i.e. the way in which the fugue subject reverses the intervals of the opening) suggests the idea of a palindrome and, before long, one appears, scored for strings and two bassoons - the first appearance of non-string instruments for several minutes: **Ex.212.** When the octave leaps in the lower part are removed, the similarity in shape between the first half of the palindrome and the opening of the symphony is readily apparent so that, although its appearance at this point sounds mysterious, the continuity is maintained. In fact it is

the novel scoring and the unusual register which make this passage sound so unusual.

This palindrome appears three times, the next appearance occuring from b.1342 a major third higher (i.e. starting on F) and the last beginning at b.1372, a further semitone higher. The second statement of the palindrome is similarly unorthodox in its scoring with the main two-part idea taken by two muted horns - the lower one doubled an octave below by double-basses - and the central group of notes played by piccolo with bass clarinet doubling three octaves below. The third appearance is more conventionally scored for two trombones and two muted trumpets.

In between these strange palindromic interruptions come fugato developments of Ex.211 (see bb.1338 and 1359). These are of increasing intensity and become gradually more active until, after the final statement of the palindrome, a much more agile figure emerges and is treated in fugato style: **Ex.213.**

This figure combines elements of Ex.211 (the scalic design, based on the countersubject) with two important aspects of Ex.212. The first of these is the prominent octave leap at the beginning of Ex.212. This recurs at the opening of Ex.213 and is to become increasingly prevalent as the music unfolds. It is, in fact, basic to the entire symphony - the first two notes of the work being an octave leap. The second important

feature is marked 'x' in Ex.212 and reappears in Ex.213. It is an ascending/descending major third with the upper note repeated, and the fact that it appears over the exact centre of the palindrome naturally makes it a tiny palindrome in itself. Again this figure is absorbed into the subsequent development.

At b.1394 there begins a brief passage which contains a metrical change in which the underlying minim = 60 pulse of the work becomes a dotted minim: **Ex.214.** This change was an afterthought added by the composer after the first performance in April 1987 and before the first broadcast a few months later. The passage only lasts for forty-three bars before the original tempo re-establishes itself, but it nevertheless functions as a kind of brief second scherzo in the work. During this passage 'x' becomes an increasingly important element, both as a feature of a further derivation of Ex.213 (see Ex.214) and as the basis of a brief sequential figure - a rarity in Simpson's music (see bb.1400-1402 and bb.1414-1415).

The return to the original tempo at b.1438 occurs during the course of a powerful crescendo and leads to a ten-bar passage in which the strings obsessively develop 'x' over a long crescendo/diminuendo E in the bass (bb.1441-1450) - a moment of drama which interrupts the otherwise calm music which has dominated since the end of the scherzo. Additionally, this passage anticipates the final massive crescendo of the work, which begins at b.1451.

This crescendo constitutes the final climax of the entire symphony so, naturally enough, it must be of an appropriate size and structural significance to provide a satisfying conclusion to a work on such an ambitious scale. The crescendo is over a hundred bars long, running to b.1562 and its content brings together the most important elements in the work. It begins with four variations on the palindrome of Ex.212. These are each of sixteen bars except for the last one which is fourteen bars (bb.1451-1466, 1467-1482, 1499-1514, 1515-1528) and, of course, they become gradually more intense. Although extremely sustained, they have a non-palindromic ostinato accompaniment which is much more active and which changes with (or sometimes within) each variation. The first two of these accompaniments consist of soft, ascending triplet scales in the strings which, although unobtrusive, serve to prepare for a reintroduction of the opening triplet pulse at the end of the crescendo. The way in which a gradual crescendo is achieved over a more active ostinato accompaniment is highly reminiscent of the way that Bruckner builds up a climax in many of his symphonic Adagios - particularly those of the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies.

By the time the fourth variation has been reached the triplet pattern has forcefully established itself as a foreground feature whilst the palindrome itself has receded somewhat. The triplets move via octave leaps to repeated notes (b.1528) and by this point the palindromic material has taken

on the guise of the slow chorale-like music of the opening section leading to an inevitable return of the basic 'wedge' shape of the 'chorale's' outline: **Ex.215.** It is also at this point that the pattern of tonal planes successively a fourth higher begins to re-establish itself, beginning on F (b.1529) and moving through seven pedal-points until B is reached at b.1547 (this pattern can be easily traced in the strings). The breaking of this pattern is accompanied by disturbances of the ostinato rhythm through powerful interjections of a figure in the brass and woodwind based on Ex.196: **Ex.216.** The doubling at the fifth of what is basically a three-voice figure is highly characteristic of Simpson's later work and, in this case, it forms the basis of the massive chord change at b.1561-62 (which itself is derived from Ex.197).

Bar 1561 has a 'rit' marked in - the only one in the symphony except for the 'poco rit' in the last three bars. Simpson added this at a later date because he felt this final great climax of the entire work needed more weight. The return of the triplet E^{b}s, hammered out by the timpani creates a sense of return (albeit in highly rhetorical terms) of the work's opening. However, this is not the end of the symphony for the final chord subsides to a sustained E^{b} (bb.1566-1571) and a quiet contemplative coda begins.

The beginning of the coda is, in fact, another fugato, the subject combining many elements of previously heard material

but being quite clearly derived from Exx.196 and 197. (The beginning of the subject is anticipated in the third of the palindromic variations at bb.1505-1509.) Tonally it moves upwards through a fifth instead of a fourth and the scalic figure at the end of the subject is taken up in the bass (b.1578) which makes as if to rise through an octave from A^b to A^b but which 'overshoots' to A natural in the manner described earlier concerning the passage from b.383 to b.405. This rising scale begins to spread through the other voices and, along with Ex.217, comes to dominate the closing pages of the symphony. Towards the end the basic wedge-shape of the work's opening is heard deep in the bass in its simplest possible form (**Ex.218**) and a slow, extremely soft, scalic ascent in the strings through six octaves to the highest D# makes the sense of return to the symphony's opening seem complete. But it is, of course, now at the very opposite end of the scale and, with the entry of Ex.197 at b.1671 there is the sense that the intervals are about to re-group themselves and that the entire work could begin again with the same material, though from a new point of departure and perhaps with quite different results.

Note

1. Composer's note to Quartet No.10.

SYMPHONY NO.10 (1988)

At the time of writing this symphony remains unperformed and has in fact only just been finished. A brief description follows for the sake of completeness, more detailed consideration being inappropriate at this stage. This is due to two reasons: 1) the work is large-scale and quite complex, necessitating a period of assimilation equal to that of the Ninth, and 2) it has been demonstrated that Simpson is in the habit of making changes after the first performance - sometimes of a fairly radical nature (consider the openings of Symphony No.6), so any cut-and-dried analytical statements may well prove premature.

The Tenth is dedicated to Vernon Handley who has done more than any other conductor to promote Simpson's symphonies in recent years, having given exemplary performances of Nos. 2, 6, 7 and 9 (the last three on disc). The work is on the same time-scale as No.9, lasting a little under fifty minutes and it is scored for the same orchestral forces with the sole addition of a second set of timpani. Its layout is quite different however, comprising an opening Allegro, a brief Scherzo/Intermezzo second movement, a large slow movement placed third and a very fast finale with a slow introduction.

The striking opening, with its fortissimo 6/3 chord of C-sharp major and upward octave leap, echoes right through the

symphony: **Ex.219.** The idea is also used to close the work and appears, in metamorphosed form, at the beginning of the second movement: **Ex.220.** Other ideas basic to the work show quite clearly the hallmarks of Simpson's style: the frequent use of the interval of the minor third (bb.2 and 4), the recent tendency to double entire chords at the fifth (b.3) and, stemming directly from the Ninth Symphony, the use of ideas derived from expanding intervals. This last feature can be seen in b.3 where it will be seen that the intervals between each voice of this basically three-part figure expand (see Ex.219) relating the music to an idea towards the end of Symphony No.9 (see Ex.216). This idea occurs in many guises throughout the work and is frequently to be heard with its characteristic doubling at the fifth, often in widely spaced registers (as in Ex.219.

The first one hundred and thirty-two bars serve as a kind of introduction to the main body of the first movement which is a vigorous one-in-a-bar 3/4 Allegro of the kind frequently found in the symphonies of Nielsen. The tempo marking for this section is 𝅗𝅥. = c.66 accelerating to 𝅗𝅥. = c.76 between b.433 and b.437, a further diminution occurs at b.577 where the tempo changes from 3/4 to 2/4 (so that 𝅗𝅥 = c.114). This tempo is itself the unit of pulse for the 3/2 section in the last seventeen bars of the movement so that the movement ends with a rather faster minim pulse than the 𝅗𝅥 = c.96 with which it began.

Additionally, the 3/4 section from b.133 begins as a kind of free variation on the opening with the octave leaps of Ex.219's fifth bar taking an important role. As with the previous symphony, everything can be traced back to the opening, the difference being that in this case the opening consists of a number of individual elements rather than a single recognisable progression as in Ex.196.

Simpson's fondness for extended passages based on chains of interlocking fifths and fourths is also in evidence throughout the work. One such example occurs in the first movement between b.549 and b.606 where the bass line moves through a complete cycle of fifths (strings, tuba, horns, bb.549-576) followed by timpani and trumpets doing the same thing (bb.577-606). Throughout this passage, the rest of the material is basically derived from b.3 of Ex.219.

An unusual feature of the second movement is that it is virtually at the same tempo as the main body of the first movement ($\dot{d}.$ = c.60 as opposed to $\dot{d}.$ = c.66). However, in all other respects the contrast between them could hardly be greater for, whilst the first movement was essentially vigorous and dramatic, the second is extremely lightly scored and almost entirely pianissimo throughout. This kind of light, delicate writing has become something of a feature in Simpson's more recent music and the closest similarities to this movement are to be found in the scherzos of the Eighth and Tenth Quartets.

Harmony based on superimposed thirds is an important element in the movement: **Ex.221**, and in this case, it is the way in which the thirds are approached that is of particular interest. Beginning with harmony built upon interlocking fifths, each note expands outwards to create a major third. Not only does this relate to the idea of expanding intervals presented at the first movement's opening, but the fact that the lowest interval is doubled at the fifth above and, again at the fifth above that, takes the doubling procedure outlined in b.3 of the first movement a stage further. This figure is developed to form an expanding/contracting idea which becomes a particularly important feature of the movement: **Ex.222**. This particular idea can be traced back to the first movement (c.f. b.156 et al.).

Towards the end of the movement there occur two brief intensifications, the second of which involves the building up of a complex and widely spaced chord (bb.341-384). This chord contains eleven notes of the chromatic scale with only the G♯ withheld - the single note onto which the movement at length 'resolves'.

In order to balance the brevity of the second movement (under seven minutes) the Adagio which follows is on a generous scale. At approximately seventeen and a half minutes long it is the largest movement of the symphony, and in design it follows

an A-B-A pattern with a faster central section balancing the slow fugal outer ones.

The very opening of the movement corresponds directly to that of the previous one: **Ex.223** (c.f. Ex.220). However, the opening melody progresses in an entirely different manner and a large fugato unfolds, scored mainly for strings but with three mysterious interruptions from the brass (in the second and third appearances they are joined by a single woodwind instrument). Each of these interruptions acts as a kind of an echo of the symphony's very opening 6/3 chord with the melodic shape of the upper part in bb.1 and 2 of Ex.219 and continuing with reference to the chordal progression and doubling from b.3: **Ex.224.**

The central portion of the movement retains the quaver pulse of the opening but changes the tempo to 3/8, resulting in a relaxed one-in-a-bar pulse of ♩. = c.48. The whole of this section is quiet and mysterious with long lines built from legato quavers frequently ending in a sustained note to which another line is then added. The result is a gradual build-up of sustained notes forming dense, sometimes twelve-note, chords (b.211). Another feature of this section is the use of chordal progressions on the brass based on the principle of symmetrical inversion - that is to say, the lower three notes of, for example, a six-note chord are an inversion of the upper ones:

Ex.225. It is this progression which provokes the main climax of the movement at the return of the opening tempo (b.372).

The final section winds down the tension, returning to the calm of the opening. As with the first section, it is scored mainly for strings and, once again, there are occasional chordal interjections though they are now confined mainly to single 6/3 major triads sustained softly on brass and low woodwind. Also, the polyphonic texture is not interrupted by these appearances as it was during the first section. The very soft ending refers to the method of building up a chord by using superimposed fifths, each note of which expands outwards to produce a major third - as encountered in the previous movement (see Exx.221, 222): **Ex.226.**

The finale begins with a slow introduction before turning into a very large and vigorous fugue - Simpson describes it as "Hammerklavierisch" and there is indeed a comparable sense of scale as well as structural similarities between the two finales. The opening of Simpson's finale complements the end of the previous movement: again, chords built out of groups of thirds (this time minor ones) and, again, the entries tend to be distanced at the fifth. However, whereas the chord in the last few bars of the third movement was largely built out of successive descending entries, this one is built from the bottom upwards: **Ex.227.** This material in both ascending and descending order forms the basis of much of the introduction

which alternates two slow tempi: the opening one of ♩ = c.50 and a faster one at the same speed as the outer sections of the third movement. From this introduction the main fugal Allegro does not so much emerge as explode: **Ex.228.** The wide compass of this subject (three octaves), together with its extraordinary length, naturally results in a fugue of great size, complexity and astonishing virtuosity. The fugue in the Beethoven Op.106 sonata and the Grosse Fuge Op.133 itself seem to be the only works with which it could possibly be compared. Like Beethoven in the 'Hammerklavier', Simpson introduces a gentler 'second subject' (bb.499-505: the relationship to the opening of the third movement should be apparent) and then proceeds to combine them in a remarkable variety of ways (b.572 et al.), driving the work to a powerful conclusion without once slackening the pace.

Although inevitably less concentrated than its predecessor, the Tenth is nevertheless an impressive and ambitious work. It is substantially different to his other symphonies in both form and content and when it is actually performed it may well be seen as a new departure - although Simpson says he always tries to make each symphony as different from the previous one as possible. With almost forty years of symphonic composition behind him, and with an eleventh symphony planned, his powers of invention seem as potent as ever.

CONCLUSION

Throughout his career Simpson has resolutely stood outside prevailing fashions and trends and one of the musical results of this has been that the music he is currently writing is recognisably that of the composer of Symphony No.1 - written almost forty years ago. As this study has demonstrated, his style in the intervening years has deepened rather than changed and the focus upon compositional objectives has been sharpened.

Basic to this deep continuity has been Simpson's concern with tradition, not with a nostalgia for the past, but with tradition as a continuous organic process. After all, history is a continuous process - as Simpson says, "Nothing we do disappears: therefore everything we do, however trivial it seems, is important"[1]. and the various kinks and wrong-turnings that history seems to periodically take are reflected in Simpson's basic concern to restore to music the energy and momentum of Beethoven's time after what he sees as an intervening artistic blind-alley.

The belief in tradition as an organic process is reflected in the processes of the music itself, which have been described in the previous pages. It is Simpson's uncommon intelligence and insight which have enabled him to reflect these organic processes in music with its own fully integrated and highly individual syntax. The clarity of his formal processes reflects

the questioning nature of his mind - a mind which also embraces a profound (not a dabbler's!) understanding of science and astronomy (he is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society). His remarkable ability to articulate and clarify his concerns sets him apart from many other composers who might be labelled 'traditionalist' (as well as many who might not) and lends his art its peculiarly compelling qualities. He is not a naive artist, happily wallowing in a pool of what he believes to be divine inspiration; instead he says, "The only faith I have is in quality and the belief that humanity's greatest gift is the ability to ask questions."[2]. From this it will be apparent that Simpson does not believe in theory without practice and this has a deep effect on his own music. His own programme-note on the Ninth Symphony after outlining the musical processes involved concludes with the words "without human contact music is nothing; listen for that first - the rest is mere map-reading."

Simpson's dogged refusal to follow trends and his determination to write music which, whilst remaining 'traditional' in the deepest sense of the word, is also challenging and uningratiating has resulted in a formidably impressive body of work. But he has also paid a price for this independence, firstly and most practically in terms of earning a living. This he could not have done from composing music, so that for thirty years he pursued a demanding full-time job at the B.B.C. which left little time for composing except at

holidays and weekends. Secondly, perhaps his very presence at the B.B.C. limited the possibilities for the wider broadcast of his music - the hyper-sensitive Corporation would not have wished to be accused of nepotism. On the other hand, during the Glock era there would have been little chance of Simpson's music getting much air-time anyway. Inevitably, the limited number of performances of his music has resulted in the familiar situation of a composer, whose music is not widely known, putting off concert planners who only wish to include well-known names, therefore ensuring that the name remains little known and perpetuating the problem.

Happily, for Simpson the situation is beginning to change. Since his sudden departure from the B.B.C. in 1980, broadcasts of his work, though not exactly frequent, have become more regular (though, in general, they are relays of concerts not promoted by the B.B.C.) and, in 1980, a Robert Simpson Society was formed (entirely independent of the composer, one should add!) to promote knowledge of his work - a rare tribute to a living composer. Thanks to their efforts, excellent recordings of Quartets 7-11 are available and of Symphonies 6, 7 and 9 (the disc of the Sixth and Seventh Symphonies was sponsored by the Arts Council).

In 1986 Simpson and his wife moved to the remote west coast of Ireland and there, relatively free from distractions, Simpson has begun to compose increasingly prolifically. In the

space of just over two years he has completed the Ninth Symphony, written the whole of the Tenth and composed Quartet No.12, a String Trio, a String Quintet, a Piano Trio and a fifteen-minute choral piece. Clearly, rather than relaxing in his new home he is actually accelerating his rate of work. With the new Piano Trio recently finished and an Eleventh Symphony well under way there is no reason why his creativity should not continue to flourish and the history of twentieth century symphonic music be further enriched. The composer, characteristically is rather more prosaic about it, saying: "The poor old sod has a lot of ginger in him yet."[3].

Notes

1. Dearling, Robert: 'Composer of our time'. Records and Recordings, Oct.1979.
2. ibid.
3. Letter to author.

Chronological List of Works

Piano Sonata (1946) Duration 20 mins. pub. Lengnick.
Variations and Finale on a theme of Haydn, for piano (1948)
Duration 20 mins. pub. Lengnick.
Symphony No.1 (1951) 3(1).2.2.2+1. 4.4.3.1. Timp. Str.
Duration 25 mins pub. Lengnick.
String Quartet No.1 (1952) Duration 25 mins. pub. Lengnick.
String Quartet No.2 (1953) Duration 15 mins. pub. Lengnick.
String Quartet No.3 (1954) Duration 22 mins. pub. Lengnick.
Allegro deciso, for strings (1954) (from Quartet No.3) Duration 11 mins.
pub. Lengnick.
Symphony No.2 (1956) 2.2.2.2. 2.2.0. Timp. Str. Duration 30 mins.
pub. Lengnick.
Canzona for brass (1958) 4 Trps, 3 Trbs, Tuba. Duration 5 mins.
pub. Lengnick. Commissioned BBC.
Variations and Fugue for recorder and string quartet (1959)
Duration 13 mins. (unpub.)
Symphony No.3 (1962) 3(3).2.2.2+1. 4.2.3.1. Timp. Perc(1). Str.
Duration 30 mins. pub. Lengnick. Commissioned City of Birmingham SO.
The Pretenders (Ibsen) (1965) Incidental Music. Commissioned BBC. (unpub.)
Piano Concerto (1967) 3(3).2.2.2+1 4.3.3.1. Timp. Perc(2). Str.
Duration 25 mins. pub. Lengnick. Commissioned Cheltenham Festival.
Trio for clarinet, cello and piano (1967) Duration 24 mins.
pub. Lengnick. Commissioned Gervase de Peyer.
Quintet for clarinet and string quartet (1968) Duration 34 mins.
pub. Lengnick.
Energy (1971 World Brass Band Championship Test Piece) Duration 9 mins.
pub. Boosey and Hawkes.
Symphony No.4 (1972) 3(3).2.2.2+1. 4.4.3.1. Timp. Perc(2). Str.
Duration 47 mins. pub. Lengnick.
Symphony No.5 (1972) 3(3).2.2+1.2+1. 4.4.4.2. Timp(2). Perc(2). Str.
Duration 38 mins. pub. Lengnick. Commissioned LSO.
String Quartet No.4 (1973) Duration 44 mins. pub. Lengnick.
String Quartet No.5 (1974) Duration 44 mins. pub. Lengnick.
Samson Agonistes (Milton) (1974) Incidental Music. (unpub.)
String Quartet No.6 (1975) Duration 36 mins. pub. Lengnick.
Media morte in vita sumus (1975) SATB, 4 Hns, 2 Trps, 3 Trbs, Timp.
Duration 12 mins. pub. Lengnick.
Symphony No.6 (1977) 2(1).2.2+1.2+1. 4.3.3.1. Timp. Perc(1). Str.
Duration 30 mins. pub. Lengnick. Commissioned LPO.
Symphony No.7 (1977) 2.2.2.2. 2.2.0.0. Timp. Str. pub. Faber.
String Quartet No.7 (1977) Duration 20 mins. pub. Lengnick. Commissioned
for centenary of the astronomer Sir James Jeans.
Volcano (1979 National Brass Band Championship Test Piece)
Duration 9 mins. pub. Rosehill.
String Quartet No.8 (1979) Duration 30 mins. pub. Faber. Commissioned
Brunel University Music Society.
Sonata for two pianos (1979) Duration 26 mins. (unpub.)
Symphony No.8 (1981) 3(3).2+1.3(1 E flat)+1.3+1. 4.4.4.2. Timp(2). Perc(3).
Str. Duration 41 mins. pub. Faber. Commissioned Royal Philharmonic
Society.
Quintet for clarinet, bass clarinet, and string trio (1981). Duration
17 mins. (originally for Cl, BCl, and 3 contrabassi). (unpub.)

String Quartet No.9 (Variations and Fugue on a theme by Haydn) (1982) Duration 57 mins. pub. Faber. Commissioned Delme String Quartet.
Suite, The Four Temperaments, for brass band (1982) Duration 21 mins. pub. Rosehill.
Variations on a theme of Carl Nielsen, for orchestra (1983). 2+1.2+1.2+1.2+1. 4.3.3.1. Timp. Perc(2). Str. Duration 25 mins. pub. Lengnick.
String Quartet No.10 (For Peace) (1983) Duration 26 mins. pub. Roberton. Commissioned Coull String Quartet.
String Quartet No.11 (1984) Duration 26 mins. pub. Roberton. Commissioned Alfreton Music Club.
Sonata for violin and piano (1984) Duration 30 mins. (unpub.). Commissioned Pauline Lowbury.
Trio for horn, violin and piano (1984) Duration 18 mins. pub. Lynwood Music Commissioned Festival Trio of London.
Eppur si muove (Ricercar e Passacaglia), for organ (1985) Duration 30 mins (unpub.)
Symphony No.9 (1986) 2+1.2+1.2+1.2+1. 4.3.3.1. Timp. Str. Duration 50 mins. pub. Faber. Commissioned Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.
Introduction and Allegro on a bass by Max Reger (1986). Duration 15 mins. pub. Rosehill.
Tempi (1987) SATB a cappella. Duration 15 mins. pub. Roberton.
String Quintet (1987) Duration 30 mins. pub. Roberton. Commissioned BBC.
String Quartet No.12 (1987). Duration 30 mins. (unpub.) Commissioned Nottingham Festival.
String Trio (Prelude, Adagio and Fugue) (1987) Duration 14 mins. (unpub.)
Symphony No.10 (1988) 2+1.2+1.2+1.2+1. 4.3.3.1. Timp(2). Str. Duration 48 mins.
Trio for violin, cello and piano (1988-9). Duration 36 mins. (unpub.) Commissioned Bournemouth Ensemble.

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Complete Discography

Symphony No.1	LPO/Boult	EMI/HMV BLP 1092 (1957) *
	(re-issued)	EMI/HMV HQM 1010 (1966) *
Symphony No.3	LSO/Horenstein	Unicorn UNS 225 (1970) *
	(re-issued)	UNS 262 (1980)
Symphony No.6	RLPO/Handley	Hyperion CDA 66280 (1988)
Symphony No.7	(see Symphony No.6)	
Symphony No.9	Bournemouth S.O./Handley	Hyperion CDA 66299 (1988)
String Quartet No.1	Aeolian Quartet	Unicorn UNS 234 (1971) *
String Quartet No.7	Delme Quartet	Hyperion LP A66117 (1984)
String Quartet No.8	(see String Quartet No.7)	
String Quartet No.9	Delme Quartet	Hyperion LP A66127 (1984)
String Quartet No.10	Delme Quartet	Hyperion CD A66225 (1988)
String Quartet No.11	(see String Quartet No.10)	
Clarinet Quintet	Walton/Aeolian Quartet	Unicorn UNS 234 (1971) *
	(re-issued)	UNS 622 (1980)
'Volcano'	Black Dyke Mills Band/Parkes	Chandos BBR 1004
'Energy'	GUS Footwear Band/Boddington	EMI/HMV TWO 379 (1972) *
Canzona	Philip Jones Brass Ensemble	Decca SDP 274 (1971)
	Locke Brass Consort/Stobart	RCA RL 25081 (1977) *

* No longer available