
TOCCATA
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David Hackbridge JOHNSON
ORCHESTRAL MUSIC, VOLUME TWO
SYMPHONY NO. 10, OP. 312, NO. 1
SYMPHONY NO. 13, OP. 361, NO. 1
MOTET NO. 6, OP. 337, NO. 4
Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Paul Mann
FIRST RECORDINGS

DAVID HACKBRIDGE JOHNSON: ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOLUME TWO
ANCIENT FORMS AND RAUCOUS CEREMONIES

by David Hackbridge Johnson

My Ninth Symphony[1] was not explicitly a memorial to my first wife, Carol – more of a 'Notes towards a Memorial'. That being the case, I allowed the memorial aspect to loom closer in my next symphony, or so I thought. Perhaps there is something in the nature of grief that forbids too close an approach: the presumption of art (that is, of the artist) to attempt a memorial can be a task that stalls in the face of still raw emotion. And who benefits? Well, cathartically, there is some succour. But for others, what? Well, a piece of music for one thing – and it is perhaps the only thing, since to presume more would be to cross barriers that must always hold us apart from one another's experience. Having the memory of a loved one in mind was a background to actual creation – a flood of feeling and the work might have collapsed. Perhaps this is why, despite having section headings redolent of mourning (*Preludio tragico* 1, *Marche funèbre* 2, *Scherzo spettrale* 3), the Tenth Symphony won't really stand as an emblem of a particular grief – there is no dedication, an act of deliberate omission so as not to have had done with the feelings still present and not expressed, or half-hidden. In any case, as Carol might have said, 'Why so serious?' Perhaps other memories will come out in other, even happier, ways. Nevertheless, from its narrow palette of minor keys (F minor, A flat minor, E flat minor, F minor), this Symphony paints an emblem of sorts. Coming out quickly in six weeks in April and May 2013, the piece compresses much in a one-movement structure – there are no passacaglias this time (there are two in the Ninth Symphony) to underpin a monolith. There were

[1] Released on Volume One of this series, Toccata Classics TOCC 0393, with Paul Mann conducting the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

some visual cues of design in my mind: shape, colour, dreams. The slow movement really had to have a French title: in a dream episode of drums and tubas that was written down upon waking, a cortege moved through an old town in the south of France (an amalgam of Figeac and Albi, I think). The work has bookends of trumpet calls (angels of some sort?) and granitic rhythmic exchanges – things too heavy to move, and yet they do. Allusions are there, not too hard to spot; for example, the dying phrases at the close – somewhat *pathétique*.

***Motet* No. 6** 5 takes its subtitle from the Book of Daniel, 3.38: 'benedicite maria, et flumina Domino: laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula' (Vulgate) – 'O ye seas and rivers, bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever' (Douay-Rheims). The piece was inspired by plays of light reflected on calm seas seen from a distance or glistening on rivers – particularly the River Itchen which flows into the Water Meadows at St Cross in Winchester. The piece is for Xiaowei, my second wife. It is the third creative work devoted to the Water Meadows. There is a piano piece, *Watermeadows, St Cross*, Op. 357, and a poem with the same name written on 1 December 2016, which captures the scene in words and where in the context of the music each 'dart in the current' might be a new plainsong melody:

> The river is the clear plainsong of its ancient meander;
> grassy banks the nave that fills with voice,
> each fish its own mode of being;
> the incipit of its fin a dart in the current,
> a grace of swans pair their stately course,
> the reeds to probe for their rough flute,
> a quint of sparrow, a nazard of crow
> are tree-lined melisma to the stone's chant.
>
> Water-bells shimmer the distant belfry
> sounding from deeper courses; fundamentals of water
> and rock exchanging vows of sediment and flow.

And as if deposited as the church
that stands at the meadow's elbow,
ready to sing of what it found:
already ancient forms of voice and faith.

I came back from the recording of the Ninth Symphony and its companion pieces[2] (in Liverpool in December 2016) with a sense of elation. It was thrilling to hear these pieces that had been locked away for some time in my head; there was also a sense of relief that they sounded exactly as I had heard them in my inner ear. I was full of music and since that time there have been three more symphonies and some shorter pieces – something of an opening of the floodgates. **Symphony No. 13** was started almost as soon as I returned from Liverpool – its sound was elbowing its way in front of a whole array of smaller things. Elbowing is about right – the piece is pretty garrulous, at least in its outer movements 6 8; a nearly good-natured romp is at hand from the off, with the horns very much leading the raucous ceremonies. But here: no dreams, no memories – the thing just came out. The slow movement 7 seems to peak early, but I really mean the focus to be the quiet passage for strings that follows – a kind of sonnet that gives pause to the onrush of picaresque prose. I was tinkering with the finale when I received an e-mail from Paul Mann saying that he was off to conduct the *Symphonie fantastique* of Berlioz. 'It's funny you should say that', was my reply. Honestly, there were no scaffolds or witches in my mind when the finale came out, but it did strike me that there is an allusion of sorts. The end is a scramble for attention – several themes return to fight it out in a not-too-friendly riot. There is no winner, since as in the first movement the romp ends with a question mark – a sudden evaporation as if the sound gets sucked up a funnel. For all his work in bringing my orchestral music to life, the Thirteenth Symphony is dedicated 'To Paul Mann, with thanks and admiration'.

[2] Toccata Classics TOCC 0393 features performances also of my *Communion Antiphon* No. 14, Op. 359 ('St Boniface, Whitechapel') (2016) and my *Motet* No. 2, Op. 257, No. 2 (2009).

‘AS FAR AS YOU CAN GO AND STILL COME BACK’: THE ORCHESTRAL MUSIC OF DAVID HACKBRIDGE JOHNSON, VOLUME TWO

by Paul Mann

One of the most fascinating things for the performer who spends any length of time collaborating with a living composer is the opportunity to compare direct experience of the person with that of their music. Although there are composers whose nature is somehow quite clearly reflected in what they write, in most cases the situation is considerably more complicated. No one meeting David Hackbridge Johnson would readily associate such a kind, genial and rather self-effacing man with the tensile angst and passionate expressivity of so much of his music. The source of its complex and at times deeply troubled emotional world evidently lies far beneath the surface.

Composed in April and May 2013, less than a year after the completion of his Ninth Symphony,[1] David’s **Symphony No. 10** shares many of the same technical procedures, manipulating a small amount of basic material in a richly resourceful and genuinely symphonic manner. But although the earlier work is an epic 50-minute canvas in three movements, the Tenth is a single span lasting a highly concentrated half-hour (although in four distinct sections), during the course of which there is an unrelieved sense of over-arching tragedy. And, as with all the greatest dramas, it holds its most devastating developments in reserve for the final moments.

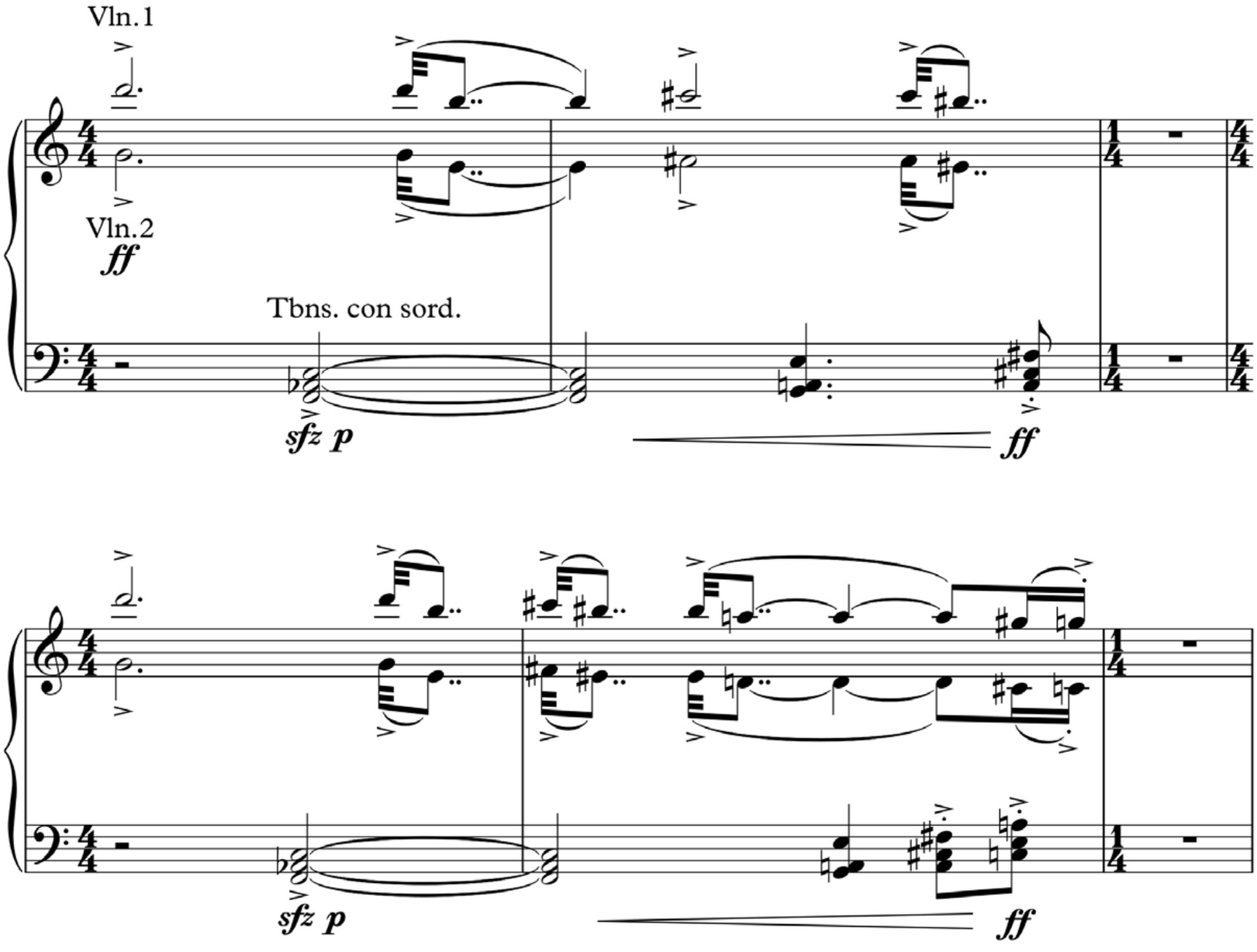
As with the Ninth, there is a complete absence of preliminaries, no scene-setting introductions: the listener is plunged directly into the midst of a crisis which seems already to have come close to breaking point, the instruments at the outer limits of their register, the music contorted with rage and despair. Although the orchestra is constituted of largely traditional forces, the woodwinds are augmented by soprano

[1] Recorded on Toccata Classics TOCC 0393, released in March 2017.

and baritone saxophones, and the brass by a euphonium, lending respectively a penetrating tang to the upper range, and a darker hue to the bass.

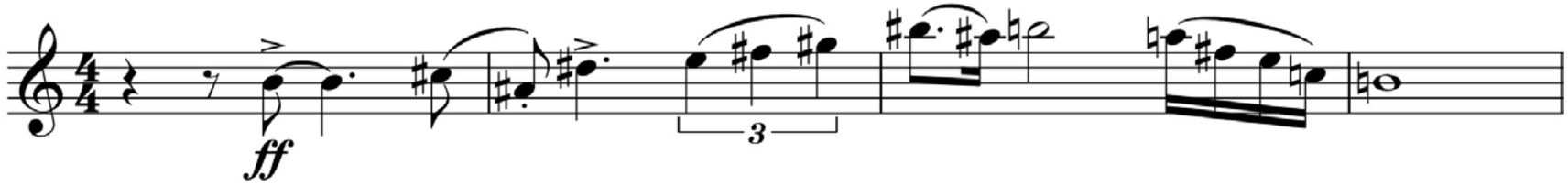
The searing first theme of the *Preludio tragico* [1] is formed of a jagged motif in open fifths which will dominate the entire symphony in various guises and transformations, and is initially presented by violins and upper woodwinds, attended by angry muted trombones (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1



The motif in turn forms the accompaniment to a more supple second theme, again heard in the massed violins, coloured by a solo flute (Ex. 2).

Ex. 2



A further exchange in the woodwinds is underpinned by the first appearance of a sonority which will prove crucial to the work, and with which listeners to the Ninth Symphony will already be familiar: what might be termed the Hackbridge Johnson 'gamelan' of harp, glockenspiel and vibraphone. These instruments, alternating with harsh violin *pizzicati*, sound five chords of diminishing intensity which succeed in calming the music for the first time. The woodwinds sustain a precarious chord, as if suddenly frozen over, and a withdrawn, more lyrical passage begins in the strings, making a short-lived attempt at tenderness. The jagged rhythms are never very far away, and continue to make their presence felt first by insinuation, but then by force, suddenly interrupting the violins as they sing sweetly and softly at the top of their register. Those same rhythms pervade the woodwinds as they once again come to rest on a glacial *pianissimo* chord.

A wildly virtuosic flourish of swirling trumpets and pealing horns, with chiming glockenspiel and vibraphone, is answered by a kind of 'anti-fanfare' in the lower brass, conflicted and angularly rhythmic. As the music becomes increasingly florid, the opening theme returns more darkly in violas and cellos. Fierce *tremolandi* in the upper strings and the tintinnabulations of the 'gamelan' are pitted against an aggressive pulsing in the low brass and pounding triplets in the timpani. A hard-edged *pizzicato* descends through the strings, preparing a new canonic treatment of the jagged motif, which in turn becomes the accompaniment to extended *cantilenas* in the flute and oboe.

A menacing atmosphere surrounds a darkly lyrical euphonium solo, with nervous twitches in the double basses. The music becomes more chromatic, its extravagant

embellishments mocked by cackling quintuplets in the lower woodwind, and disruptive figures in the brass, infecting the rest of the orchestra like a virus.

Over a shrieking trill, confrontational chromatic brass figurations, first in regular metrical groups of four and then in agitated fives, are punctuated by clangorous chords from the 'gamelan', its power to calm the orchestra now lost. In a convulsion of wildly rushing scales and snarling brass, the music goes into free-fall, setting the scene for the *Marche funèbre* 2.

Emerging from the clearing smoke, the jagged rhythms from the opening of the Symphony are transferred to the cellos and basses, newly transformed as an accompaniment to ominous triplets in the timpani and bass drum, and then to extended threnodies shared between the bass clarinet and violas, and later taken up by the tiny but dignified voice of the piccolo, which is surrounded by a halo of harp, glockenspiel and divided *tremolando* violins.

A euphonium solo adds its own oration, joined by the rich unison of bass clarinet, baritone saxophone and solo horn. There is an impassioned outburst from the strings, closely guarded by the still growling trombones, which seem finally to force the strings to converge around them for three chilling *accelerando* bars.

A climactic passage follows, in which a string unison struggles to predominate over blaring trumpets (again with the jagged rhythms) and a flurry of activity from the glockenspiel and vibraphone. As the music collapses in an incoherent tangle of conflicting voices, it becomes clear that this movement is not so much a straightforwardly programmatic funeral march as a portrayal of all the effects of grief and mourning and, ultimately, the impossibility of consolation.

The fleet-footed, nightmarish *Scherzo spettrale* 3 is cast in the customary ABA scherzo-trio-scherzo form, the only traditionally structured section in the work. Hushed scalic figurations in the strings alternate with spectral reminiscences of the jagged motif in the solo woodwinds. Only once is the implied violence made manifest, in an outburst by the full orchestra near the end of the first scherzo section. There is a short sinister snarl from the brass, and the contrasting trio follows. Against a softly pulsating background of Tchaikovsky-like horn triplets, the violins recall the second

theme of the first movement, apparently in tranquillity, although there is something about the periodic hesitations in the horns, and especially the sickly-sweet high writing for violins, which creates an extremely uneasy atmosphere. (The composer's avowed admiration for Mantovani can be said to make an incongruous appearance here.)

The scherzo returns, but strange new apparitions flicker across the music and disappear before they can be fully perceived. The brass snarls that originally silenced the scherzo are heard three more times, as if trying to halt the nightmare. But there will be no stopping it this time. The orchestra flares up as before, with volleys of violent timpani and perilously high horns. The once-calming 'gamelan' sounds a panic-stricken alarm and all hell breaks loose. A descending three-note figure, *con tutta forza,* rains down upon the orchestra, the figures orchestrated so that all the notes clash with one another, as if in an extremely resonant acoustic. Just as the crisis seems to have passed, a single bass note is heard, remaining a threat during the dying falls of the three-note figure, and one final overpowering *crescendo* obliterates the remnants of this very dark dream.

Not that what follows is any less nightmarish. A brief transition recapitulates the 'swirling trumpets and pealing horns' passage from the first section, but now churns far more violently. As the billowing figurations fall, the Epilogue 4 begins with a lonely cor anglais remembering the opening theme of the first movement, shortly joined by the solo flute. The divided violins recall the theme, too, richly harmonised as if trying to humanise it, but they are fighting a losing battle against a threatening bass. A more extreme version is hurled out by the entire brass section, playing *fortissimo* but muted, together with a return of the funereal triplets in the timpani and harp. Just as they had at the height of the funeral march, the massed strings sing an impassioned unison *cantilena,* but the first violins are now straining among the very highest notes of which they are capable.

Another sequence is recapitulated from the first movement, in which the 'gamelan' had first succeeded in calming the orchestra. Although they do elicit a *diminuendo*, the result is an edgy *tremolando* in the strings, and a newly extended return of the aggressive pulsing rhythms in the low brass.

A bass drum roar and a relentless pounding in the timpani precipitates a final full-throated statement of the opening theme of the Symphony. Although the work began as if already at an extreme, the music seems only now to discover just how much further it still had to go. A final screaming chord is wrenched off, leaving only a tremulous shivering in the bass.

In the desolate final moments, the descending three-note figure that had formed the climax of the *Scherzo* returns, this time softly and helplessly. Its increasingly dejected supplications are met only by a reiteration of the same chords from the 'gamelan' which had calmed the raging orchestra at the beginning of the symphony, but which now sound like mere platitudes. There is more than a hint of Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' about these closing bars, with the same absence of any possibility of solace. It is, as Leonard Bernstein once remarked of that work, 'as far as you can go and still come back'.[2]

Only around six weeks after the Liverpool recording of his Ninth Symphony, David Hackbridge Johnson finished work on his **Symphony No. 13**. Since the completion of the Tenth, he had begun an Eleventh, which currently remains unfinished, and a Twelfth, which is – in his own words – 'quite an odd thing requiring lots of world instruments, which will condemn it to oblivion unless I make a new version, which I intend to do'.[3] The Thirteenth Symphony is thus the first after the Tenth to have reached its final form.[4]

In three distinct movements, lasting around 37 minutes, Symphony No. 13 is an immensely energetic work, highly virtuosic both in its compositional ingenuity and in the considerable demands it makes of a standard-sized orchestra. In spite of its scale, it is also particularly tightly organised and closely argued, especially in the outer movements. There is not a single wasted gesture, nor a moment that cannot be traced to the basic compositional material, in which a conflict between the two adjacent pitches of A and A flat is frequently to be found. The consequent alternating inflections of sharp and flat tonalities colour much of the harmonic language.

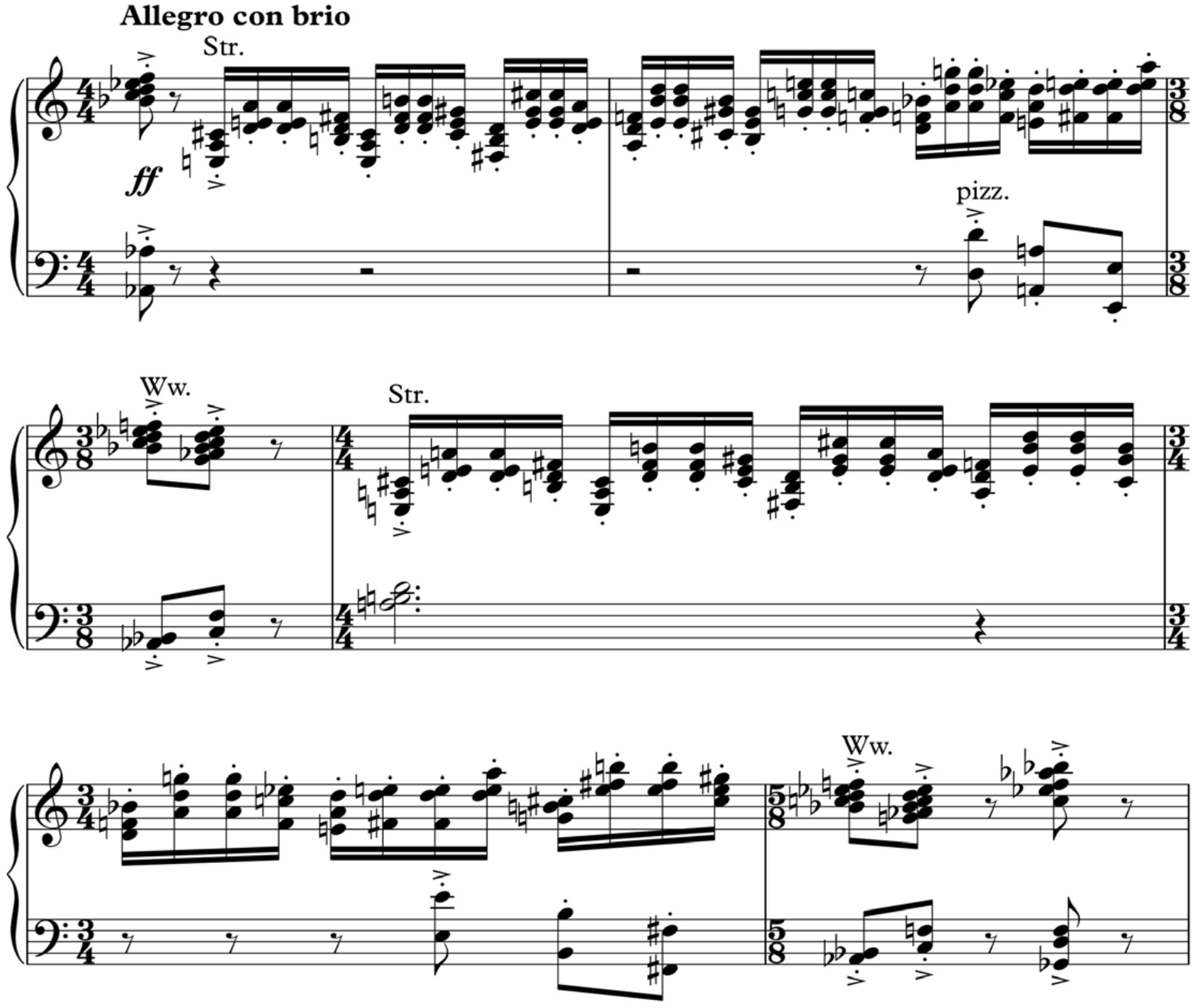
[2] Interview with David Patrick Stearns, 'A Family Affair', *Gramophone*, May 1987, p. 1511 (on the release of Bernstein's recording with the New York Philharmonic, DG 419 604-2).

[3] E-mail to me, dated 5 April 2018.

[4] His current tally of symphonies has reached No. 15, which is scheduled for Volume Three of his orchestral music.

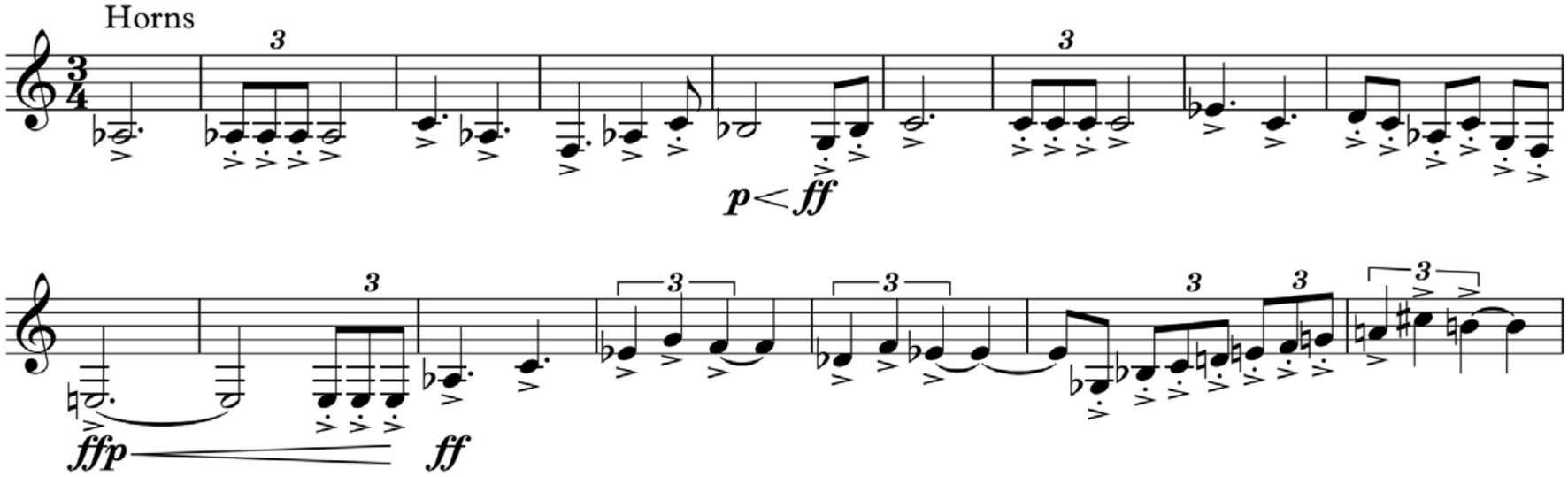
The first movement (*Allegro con brio*) 6 is a sonata form but without a formal development section, which is replaced by a process of continuous transformation and mosaic-like recombinations of all the elements. The first subject consists of two contrasting ideas. A series of agile semiquaver figurations in the violins alternates with metrically unstable rhythmic cells in the winds (Ex. 3).

Ex. 3



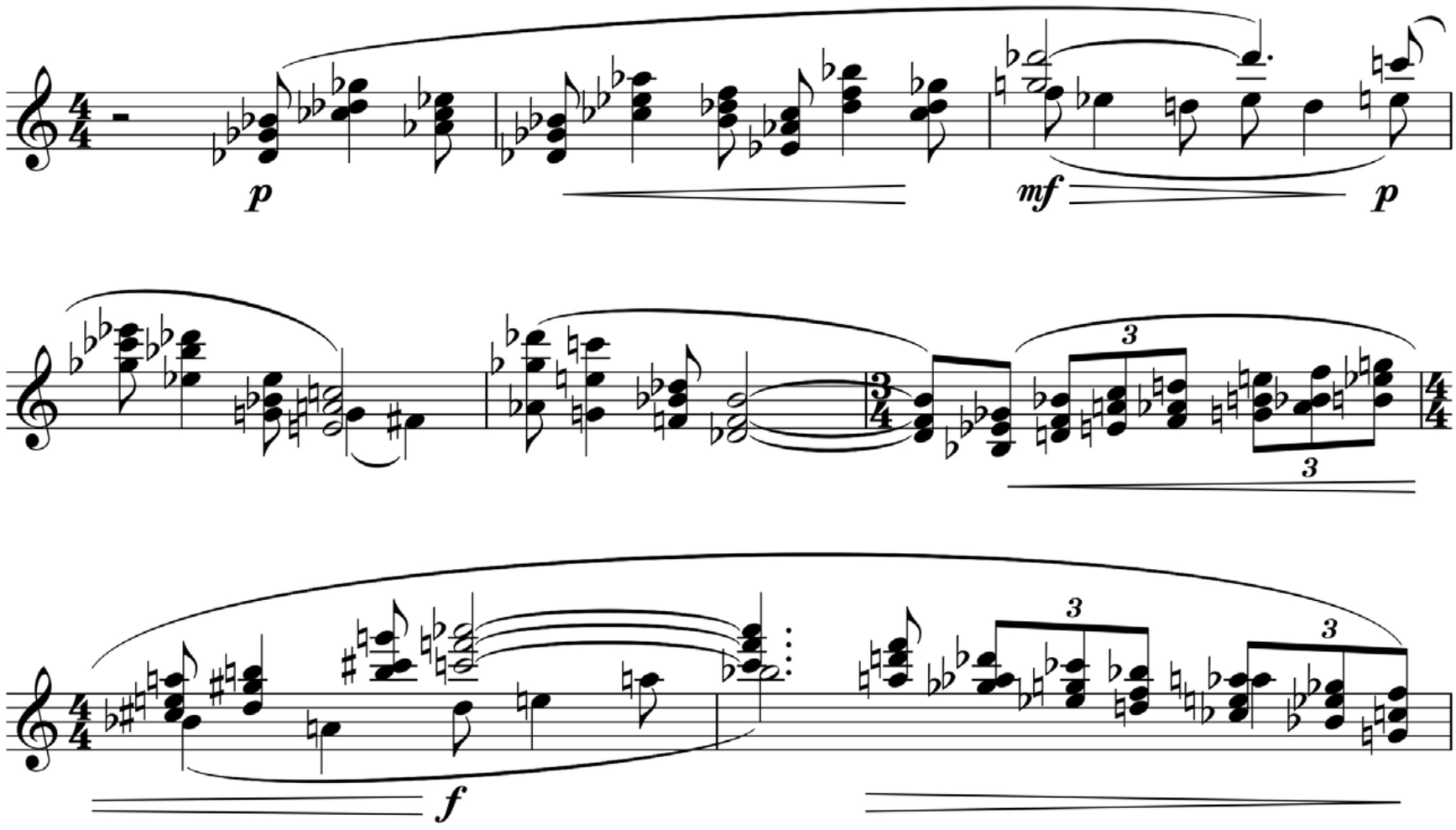
A theme for all four horns in unison is then superimposed onto all the bustling activity. Although the first idea is in A, the horn theme is in A flat, reiterating the note in a fanfare-like triplet figuration as it begins. This theme (Ex. 4) will make dramatic reappearances in the finale, unifying the work as a whole.

Ex. 4



The violins soon pick up on the theme in their own imitative version, followed by a further variation for three trumpets. Biting chords in the lower brass disrupt the metre with a pair of $\frac{7}{8}$ bars, unevenly divided in groups of 2+3+2 and 2+2+3, a gesture that will later have more serious consequences for the flow of the music. As the horns try to re-establish the supremacy of their theme, the Hackbridge Johnson 'gamelan' of harp, glockenspiel and vibraphone, which had been so crucial to the Tenth Symphony, makes its first appearance here, announcing the second subject, which is heard in the woodwinds against a gentle background of harp, percussion and high *tremolando* violins. It is somewhat more pastoral in nature, but it retains a syncopated angularity and harmonic density which prevents it from sounding entirely at peace (Ex. 5).

Ex. 5



It is subsequently taken over by the more warmly expressive strings, still with a strong sense of urgency, arriving at a questioning pause with darkly coloured brass harmonies, and fragments of the theme in the woodwinds which hold their final notes in a long, tense *pianissimo* chord. The nervous energy of the opening resumes, softly this time, with its initial gestures separated by silences. The development to which both the semiquaver figures and the little woodwind cells are subjected is much complicated by the constant interjection of groups of unevenly divided $\frac{7}{8}$ bars. The second subject is now heard again in the violas, its $\frac{4}{4}$ sounding simultaneously against the $\frac{3}{4}$ of the rest of the orchestra, with some hyperactively chattering bassoons. The horns then have their own rather noble-sounding version, followed by woodwinds in combination with

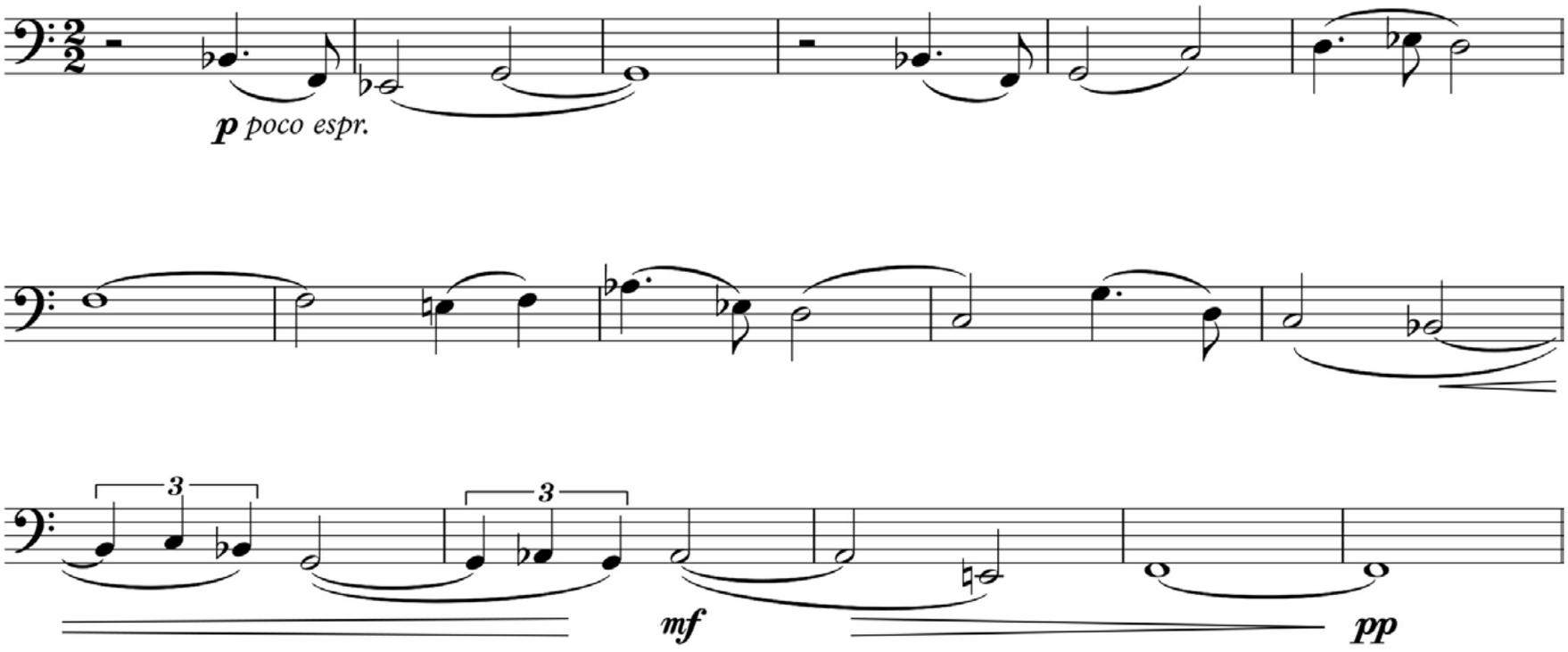
glockenspiel and vibraphone. The music seems to be evaporating, with the exchange of gently rising figures across the sections, when the trombones imperiously sound another canonic treatment of the horn theme. Their confrontational approach is met fearlessly by the violins and violas, and then by the horns themselves, fighting to reclaim their theme against some increasingly aggressive competition. Another fight for ownership takes place between the strings and the woodwinds, but then the trumpets sound a thoroughly brutalised version over a driving string *ostinato*. An extremely tense climax follows, in which the opening fanfare-like figure of the theme is reiterated against tearing legato phrases in the brass. Over a supremely discordant pile-up of a chord, the violins sing out the last few bars of the theme at the top of their register, and there is a momentary decompression of all the accumulated tension.

The recapitulation begins, but there is nothing straightforward about any of it, no carbon copies of what had gone before. Everything is entirely reorchestrated and reworked, beginning with a trading of places in the opening material between strings and winds. The horn theme, after the sparring it has already undergone, now has to fend for itself in the hands of the valiant, but much weaker, bassoons, and also is subjected to an especially charming new variant, shared between six solo violins. The second subject is also ingeniously remodelled, sounding simultaneously both in its original form in the woodwinds, and augmented in the strings, resulting in a warmly voluptuous treatment which sounds distinctly 'French', an allusion which will have further implications for the finale.

The coda begins with nervous chattering in the clarinets and bassoons, at first combined with hazy remnants from the previous section in the high strings. The horn theme continues to be fought over, first by the trumpets, and then by the trombones. There is a brief reference to the gentler second subject, but bits of it are merely tossed antiphonally around the orchestra, and the movement ends in an upward spiral of frenetic activity, like the cyclone in *The Wizard of Oz*.

The second movement (*Poco lento*) 7 begins with an eloquent theme in the cellos emerging from the depths (Ex. 6) which, developed by the violins and the woodwinds, and then by the rest of the orchestra, swiftly reaches a powerful climax.

Ex. 6



The 'gamelan' sounds a piercing alarm, as if warning that everything has happened too quickly, and the music seems to restart, with icy *tremolandi, sul ponticello*, over a *pizzicato* bass, and elaborate solo lines in the cor anglais and oboes. The texture then becomes even more bizarre, with piercing harmonics in the violins and, occupying both extremes of the register, pairs of *soli* in piccolo/flute and bass clarinet/contrabassoon.

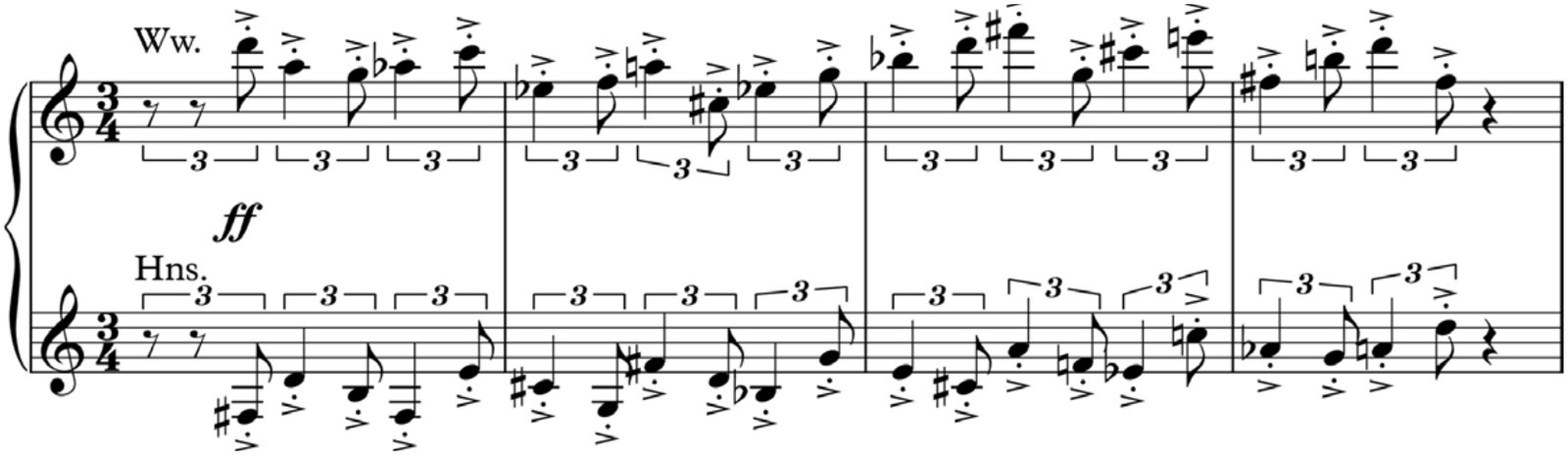
The true crux of the movement is now reached, which the composer described to me during the sessions as an 'inscape' of the previous section. It is a meditation for harp and strings which, as at the start of the movement, begins as if from the depths, but its progress is now both steadier and more secure. There are some very vivid yearnings towards the Elysian fields of English pastoralism, but the final moments of the long build-up are suddenly tortured and densely chromatic. The ecstatic climax is suffused with warmth and restrained serenity, and at its height a quartet of horns softly emerges, providing the background for a passionate violin solo, singing ardently against increasingly dark clouds gathering softly in the brass.

Once again the 'gamelan' is heard, but this time it seems to have second thoughts, and follows its *diminuendo* with an alarmed *crescendo.* The most discordant music of the movement follows, a *fortissimo* exchange between high woodwinds and trumpets, ending with a sudden reference to the horn theme from the first movement, the last note of which is taken over by the violins. In this final paragraph, the strings, coloured darkly by trombones, seem to sum up the ambiguity of the entire movement, both troubled and serene.

The sonata-rondo finale (*Allegro alla burlesca*) 8 is very strange indeed. Its bizarre landscape reveals an unexpected kinship with Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, a work I happened to be conducting while preparing the performance on this recording, and felt prompted to ask the composer for guidance. 'It's Beelzebub cleaning his teeth', he said helpfully, and – well – with all the freakish *col legno* clicking in the strings and Art Blakey-like drum effects (which call upon the timpanist to hold one stick on the drum skin and hit it with the other), it is certainly possible to perceive what must surely be the only depiction in the symphonic literature of diabolical plaque-removal.

Whatever the stimulus, the movement is rich and complex and, for all the incongruity of its humour, profoundly serious in intent. It begins with a rather jaunty, even happy-sounding, figure in the woodwinds and horns, based on the string figurations of the opening movement, and constantly shifting between the tonalities of A and A flat. The 'gamelan' rings out joyfully, as if parodying Berlioz's immense symphonic bells, heralding perhaps a less threatening version of the witches' Sabbath (Ex. 7).

Ex. 7



Whether it's a result of devilish dentistry or something else, the *col legno* figuration that follows bears the unmistakable sound of laughter in the dark. The strings take up the dance, hinting at another French masterpiece with supernatural associations, Dukas' *L'apprenti sorcier*. The metre is extremely unstable, with constantly unpredictable alternations of $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{4}{4}$ with $\frac{3}{8}$, and the deliberate exploitation of the difference between simple and compound time. Very much in the manner of Berlioz's *idée fixe*, the horn theme from the first movement makes a reappearance among all the *diablerie*. It is first heard, rather darkly coloured, in the violas and cor anglais, but soon spreads, and is also heard in combination with the trombones, which have taken on a cunningly benevolent guise as obliging dance partners. A subsidiary theme is heard in the blaring horns over a string *ostinato*, as if the demons were trying to assemble themselves into some form of symphonic dignity. The woodwinds and then the *legato* violins also try it on for size, accompanied by the glittering glockenspiel, vibraphone and harp. The music fragments, and there is a highly virtuosic exchange of rhythmic cells across the orchestra. The opening music of the movement returns, now sure of its supremacy, but this time seems to get stuck, and the atmosphere softens.

An entirely contrasting lyrical second subject is heard in the divided violins accompanied by gentle woodwinds. The trumpets and trombones have a similarly warm, if more harmonically convoluted, version, but are quickly interrupted by a return to the devilish dancing as the development section begins, set off by the strings and chuckling bassoons. All the colourful intricacy and charming delicacy is belied only by the essential deceptiveness of the music. Smiling, joking, and apparently amiable, it is leading the listener thoroughly astray, dancing perilously close to the edge of a cliff.

As the recapitulation begins, a fully orchestrated version of the dance breaks out, leading to the return of the subsidiary theme, this time taken by the trumpets. A chain of trills in the strings leads to a succession of sharply accented chords, and the second theme played this time by the horns. But there is an odd *Schwung* about them, as if they are brandishing beer tankards.

The climax of the movement is a final *appassionato* statement of the second theme over swirling harp, glockenspiel and vibraphone, and in a cinematic touch it suddenly

seems as if the entire underworld scene were dissolving before our eyes. But hidden in the mixture is an oblique reference to the first movement, and with it comes the realisation that the end of the dream was itself only part of the nightmare.

The brief coda is a *tour de force* of orchestral virtuosity. Fragments of the dance are thrown around the orchestra, with tiny *col legno* slaps, and scalic figures of the utmost rapidity. The metre is constantly shifting between $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{5}{8}$, denying the listener any possibility of rhythmic orientation. A fanfare from the trumpets heralds a final restatement of the horn theme from the first movement, attended by shrieks from the rest of the orchestra. In the midst of the tumult, the lyrical second subject is heard in a series of searing exchanges between horns and trumpets. Three bars of harsh unison chords and an exuberant whoop from all four horns unmask the real ringleaders of this riotous assembly, as the dance theme is heard one last time in the trombones. The Symphony has one final surprise as the *Wizard of Oz* cyclone that closed the first movement once again sucks all the music through a hole in the sky, this time taking the listener with it.

The ***Motet* No. 6, *Benedicite maria et flumina*** 5**,** takes its title from the biblical *Canticle of Daniel*, which is sung by three young Hebrew men who were thrown into the furnace for refusing to worship the statue of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. It is a litany of praise:

> Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord;
> Praise and exalt him above all forever.
> Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord;
> You heavens, bless the Lord;
> All you waters above the heavens, bless the Lord.
> All you hosts of the Lord; bless the Lord.

The specific part of the text drawn upon by the composer is Daniel 3:78:

> Bless the Lord, seas and rivers;
> sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever.

The music meditates upon this text, and is written in such a way that the voices overlap and echo, like a congregation at prayer. Only once, toward the end of the piece, do they fuse in a hushed unison. The instrumental voices seem to become a metaphor for the flowing seas and rivers, and in the closing moments, reach towards a state of ecstasy that is surely the purpose of meditation in all its forms. In a note at the head of the score, the composer dedicates this profoundly touching work 'with love' to his wife.

Photo: Krasimir Dechev

Paul Mann is a regular guest-conductor with many orchestras throughout Europe, the USA, Australia and the Far East. His work as chief conductor of the Odense Symphony Orchestra in Denmark achieved considerable critical success, particularly in the symphonies of Beethoven, Elgar, Mahler, Schumann and Shostakovich, and with whom he also made numerous recordings of a wide range of repertoire, for such labels as Bridge, DaCapo and EMI. He first came to international attention as winner of the first prize in the 1998 Donatella Flick Conducting Competition, as a result of which he was also appointed assistant conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. He made his LSO debut shortly afterwards, and subsequently collaborated regularly with the Orchestra, both in the concert hall and in the recording studio. Special projects with the LSO included the Duke Ellington Centenary Concert at the Barbican Hall with Wynton Marsalis, and a famous collaboration with the legendary rock group Deep Purple in two widely acclaimed performances of Jon Lord's *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* at the Royal Albert Hall, the live DVD and CD of which remain international bestsellers. Among his more recent recordings are the first-ever studio account of Lord's Concerto, with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, in collaboration with Jon Lord himself and a star-studded cast of soloists, and the

live recording of *Celebrating Jon Lord,* a special concert which took place at the Royal Albert Hall in April 2014 with an all-star cast paying tribute to the late composer.

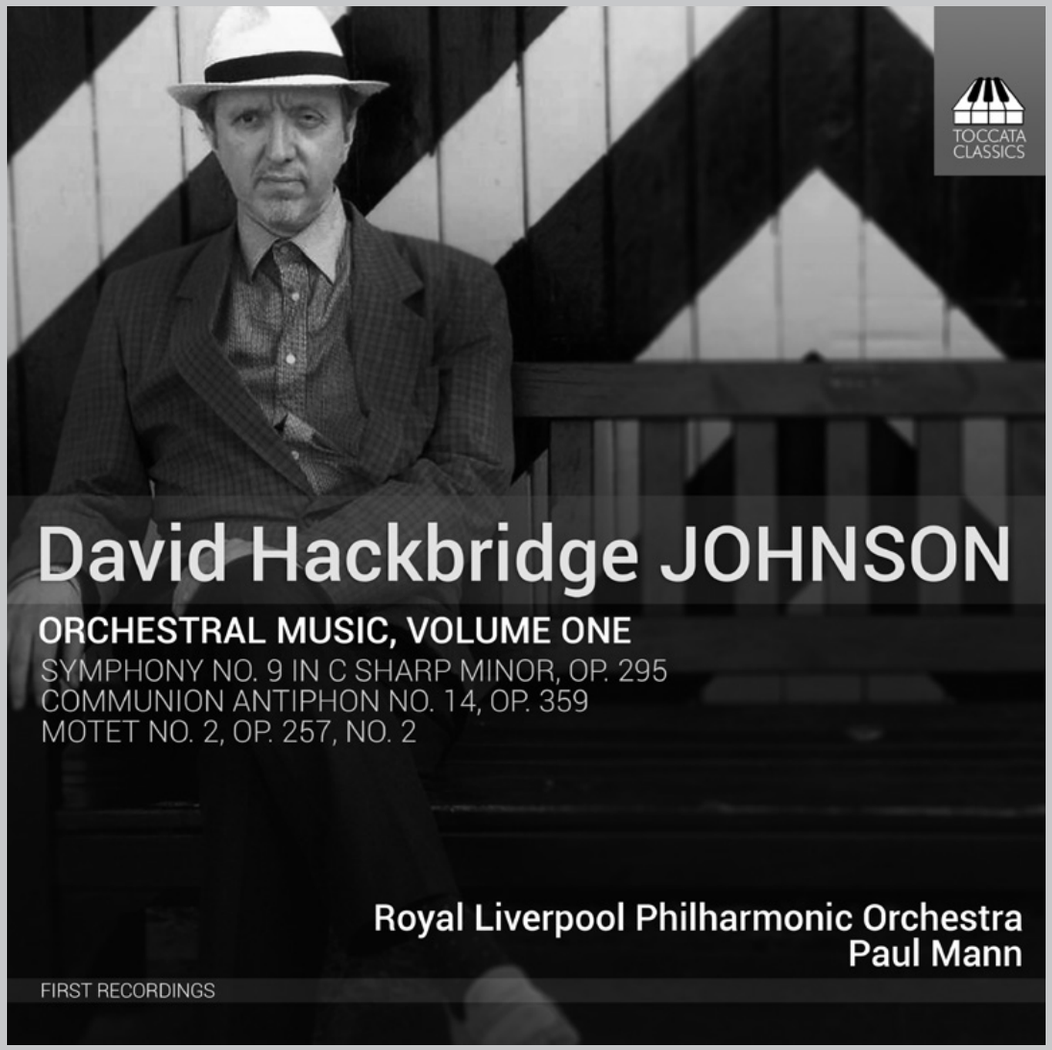
This is his twelfth recording for Toccata Classics. The first featured the orchestral music of Leif Solberg (TOCC 0260) and the second, third and fifth (TOCC 0262, 0263 and 0299) presented the complete orchestral music of the Scottish Romantic Charles O'Brien (1882–1968). His fourth was the first volume in a remarkable series of new works for string orchestra, *Music For My Love* (TOCC 0333), featuring music by Brahms (arranged by Ragnar Söderlind), Maddalena Casulana (arr. Colin Matthews), Brett Dean, Steve Elcock, Andrew Ford, Robin Holloway, Mihkel Kerem, Jon Lord (arr. Paul Mann), John Pickard, Poul Ruders and Ragnar Söderlind himself. More recently, Toccata Classics released his recordings of the Ninth Symphony of David Hackbridge Johnson (TOCC 0393) and the Third by Steve Elcock (TOCC 0400), each accompanied by smaller works, and an album of orchestral works by Josef Schelb (TOCC 0426). Paul Mann's first two volumes of the complete orchestral music of Henry Cotter Nixon (1842–1907) appeared on TOCC 0372 and 0373, also with the Kodály Philharmonic Orchestra, and a third and final volume is in preparation (TOCC 0374). Most recently, Toccata Classics released a first volume of the symphonies of the English composer Rodney Newton (b. 1945) with the Málaga Philharmonic Orchestra, with the Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4 and the tone-poem *Distant Nebulae* (TOCC 0459).

The **Royal Scottish National Orchestra** was formed in 1891 as the Scottish Orchestra; the company became the Scottish National Orchestra in 1950, and was awarded Royal Patronage in 1977. Throughout its history, the Orchestra has played an integral part in Scotland's musical life, including performing at the opening ceremony of the Scottish Parliament building in 2004. Many renowned conductors have contributed to its success, including George Szell, Sir John Barbirolli, Walter Susskind, Sir Alexander Gibson, Neeme Järvi, Walter Weller, Alexander Lazarev and Stéphane Denève. The Orchestra's current artistic team is led by the British-Canadian conductor Peter Oundjian, who joined as Music Director in 2012. The Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård was appointed as Principal Guest Conductor in the same year, with Holly Mathieson joining as Assistant Conductor in 2016. In May 2017, it was announced that Thomas Søndergård would succeed Peter Oundjian as Music Director, with Søndergård taking up his new post from September 2018. Hong Kong-born conductor Elim Chan will succeed Søndergård as Principal Guest Conductor.

The RSNO performs across Scotland, including concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness. The Orchestra appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival, the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in London and the St Magnus Festival, Orkney, and it has made recent tours to the United States of America, Spain, France, China and Germany. The RSNO was an active participant in the cultural programme of the 2014 Commonwealth Games, held in Glasgow, and in the same year hosted the Ryder Cup Gala Concert at the SSE Hydro in Glasgow The RSNO has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings, receiving two Diapasons d'Or de l'année for Symphonic Music (Denève/Roussel, 2007; Denève/Debussy, 2012) and eight Grammy nominations. Over 200 releases are available, including the complete symphonies of Sibelius (with Sir Alexander Gibson), Prokofiev (Neeme Järvi), Glazunov (José Serebrier), Nielsen and Martinů (Bryden Thomson), Roussel (Stéphane Denève) and the major orchestral works of Debussy (Denève).

The RSNO's Learning and Engagement team delivers progressive participatory music-making activities across Scotland, from Selkirk to Shetland, working with all ages and abilities. With a programme of activity available for newborns and onwards, the team is committed to delivering the highest-quality workshops as well as nurturing and developing new talent. From schools and nursery concerts to community workshops and annual residencies during which the Orchestra places itself at the centre of Scottish communities, the team connects the Orchestra, its music and musicians with the people of Scotland.

Also available on Toccata Classics



'The performance of the Ninth Symphony is remarkable. […] There is an inevitability about this music, coupled with a real sense of momentum. […] The whole disc is expertly directed by Mann, and the recording is of the top drawer. […] Their enthusiasm is completely warranted. This is, we are promised, only Volume One of the orchestral music, so there is plenty more to come, which can only be a cause for celebration. It's definitely worth taking the risk for this one.'

—Colin Clarke, *Fanfare*

Recorded on 7 and 8 March 2018 in The RSNO Centre, Glasgow
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DAVID HACKBRIDGE JOHNSON Orchestral Music, Volume Two

Symphony No. 10, Op. 312, No. 1 (2013)		**33:03**
1	I *Preludio tragico: Molto moderato –*	9:59
2	II *Marche funèbre: Lento –*	7:38
3	III *Scherzo spettrale: Presto –*	8:07
4	IV Epilogue: *Mesto*	7:19
5	***Motet* No. 6, *Benedicite maria et flumina*, Op. 337, No. 4** (2015) *Lento*	**10:46**
Symphony No. 13, Op. 361, No. 1 (2017)		**35:54**
6	I *Allegro con brio*	11:14
7	II *Poco lento*	12:02
8	III *Allegro alla burlesca*	12:38

Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Paul Mann, conductor

TT **79:55**

FIRST RECORDINGS