

JOHN BODA

Sinfonia (1960)

John Boda writes that he “met David Van Vactor at a Symposium of the Southeastern Composers League (of which I am one of the founders). On his suggestion I submitted a score for consideration. The result was a Ford Grant to write a work for the Knoxville Orchestra. The *Sinfonia* was begun in March 1960, and finished in June 1960. First performed by the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra on December 6 of the same year. Performances by Oklahoma and Rochester (New York) Orchestras followed soon after.”

As revealed in his *Sinfonia (1960)*, Boda’s musical thinking is firmly rooted in tonality and the structures that attend it. He works with familiar materials, but a display of contrapuntal skill (in the traditional sense) and an intelligent sense of pacing, give his music an individual character. Thus it is not surprising that his *Sinfonia* unfolds itself along formal lines that directly continue the sonata-symphony tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

He describes the first of the *Sinfonia*’s three movements as a modified sonata-form, with two subjects. The first, stated directly at the opening of the work, has a lyric-contemplative cast. The second, announced by the first violins, has a more active rhythmic profile, and becomes the basis for varied forms of contrapuntal invention. The traditional pacing of “first movement form” is telescoped after this presentation of initial material, so that, for example, the second subject does not appear in the recapitulation. A quiet transitional passage, involving restatement of material presented at the beginning of the work, leads directly to the second movement.

The second movement employs a large A-B-A structure, again reflecting Boda’s commitment to venerable symphonic traditions. The material of the opening section (long melodic lines – flute solo and later followed by other woodwinds, supported by simple string chords) is similar in character to the initial subject of the first movement. The mood thus established continues in the first subject of the movement’s middle section (stated by violins), but against it is introduced a more declamatory theme for muted brass. The second theme begins to dominate the structure, and gradually moves to a climactic point. Following a pause, the flute returns with the initial material of the movement, concluding with a Bruckner-like “open fifth” in the horns (latterly heard in divided violins) sustained against comments by the strings.

A brass pronouncement unambiguously opens the third movement, quickly establishing its character as a rhythmic finale. Cast in a symmetrical rondo-structure, the movement abounds in contrapuntal manipulations. Twentieth century Germanic chorale-like passages for brass prepare for the final peroration, and the work concludes with a fortissimo fifth, a-e.

John Boda was born in Wisconsin in 1922; his early musical training was in Ohio. He holds both Master’s and Doctor’s degrees in Composition from the Eastman School of Music, in Rochester, New York. He is presently at Florida State University, where he teaches piano, theory, composition, and conducting. He has composed orchestral, band, and many chamber works.

GILBERT TRYTHALL

Symphony No. 1

When Gilbert Trythall's Symphony No. 1 was given its West Coast premiere, by the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra (April 29, 1959), Alfred Frankenstein observed in his review that "the symphony is most elaborately made, but its elaboration proceeds from tough integrity and a sense of the wonder and eloquence of musical materials. Its manipulation of those materials has the genuinely big line that justifies the use of the word 'symphony.' It has humor, irony, exaltation, brilliance, and punch. Hindemith himself could not have played a chorale into glory with more telling power than Trythall exhibits as the end of his third movement."

Indeed, many pages of Trythall's score remind us of the German master. His spirit is present in the very conception of the work – its seriousness of intent, contrapuntal elaborateness, orchestral palette, and dependence on symphonic tradition. The Symphony is a large work for a large orchestra. Sonorities are piled atop each other, lines are weightily doubled, poly-voiced contrapuntal structures abound – and all adds together to convey a massive impression.

The generating cell of this long work is first presented in a motif for solo contra-bass near the beginning: a-b \flat -d-c-e-f. This succession of pitches is treated in all manner of ways, and forms the basis of various themes and counterpoints. Along with the prominently used fourth, it also controls many aspects of the Symphony's vertical organization.

The Symphony is in four movements:

I. A *lento* introduction, presenting basic material, is followed by the main movement, *allegro assai* – a sonata-allegro with two subjects, one stated by low strings, the other by the brass, chorale-fashion. The movement closes abruptly.

II. The *Vivace* is a scherzo movement, in which the perfect fourth figures as a prominent melodic interval. A waltz occurs in the center of the movement.

III. An *adagio*, especially emphasizing the low instruments, is heavily doubled. The composer describes the movement as a "modified prelude, fugue and chorale."

IV. After a slow (*pesante*) introduction a rondo in 6/8 appears, which dominates the movement. The composer tells us that "the final *allegro* combines the expanding motif of the opening in a descending pattern with the 6/8 rondo theme of the finale, and the principal theme of the first movement. In sum, the latter parts of the fourth movement serve as a recapitulation for the unclosed first movement, thus closing the entire symphony . . ." All of which is but one example of Trythall's skill in making his materials behave according to his wishes.

Trythall was born in 1930 at Knoxville, Tennessee. He studied composition with David Van Vactor, John Krueger, Wallingford Riegger, and Robert Palmer. He holds a Doctorate in Composition from Cornell University (and the Symphony here recorded is, in fact, his Doctoral Thesis). He presently teaches at Knox College in Illinois, and is conductor of the Knox-Galesburg Symphony Orchestra.

Trythall has written chamber music and songs, as well as band and orchestral works. His Symphony No. 1 was composed in 1958 (revised 1961), and was premiered in October 1958 by the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra under David Van Vactor, who commissioned the work and recorded it here.

—Notes by CHARLES WUORINEN

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David Van Vactor's professional accomplishments are three-fold. As a performer, he was flutist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and later toured in Latin America with a chamber ensemble. As a composer, performances of his own music have been both frequent and noteworthy. As conductor he has led orchestras in Kansas City, South America, and Knoxville (Tenn.), where, since 1947, he has been permanently engaged. Recent guest appearances have taken him to Europe and its leading orchestras.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)