

Ray Green **SUNDAY SING SYMPHONY** (1946)
David Van Vactor **SYMPHONY NO. 2** (1957)

HESSIAN RADIO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
(Symphonie-Orkester des Hessischen Rundfunks)
DAVID VAN VACTOR conducting

RAY GREEN, Missouri-born (Cavendish, 1909) and San Francisco raised had the bulk of his basic musical training in the city of the Golden Gate, where he studied under such personages as Ernest Bloch, Albert Elkus, and Guilio Silva. He won a fellowship for study abroad during the middle 1930's, and while there gained conducting experience under Pierre Monteux and further study in composition under Milhaud.

Upon his return to the U.S., Green was active as composer in the dance field, doing the score of *American Document* for Martha Graham in 1938. The years just before and during World War Two saw him taking an important role as composer-conductor at first with the Federal Music Project in northern California and later as a member of the Armed Forces, where he devoted himself to the task of working out music programming for the armed forces rehabilitation centers. He was Chief of Music for the Veterans Administration when in 1948, he was invited to become Executive Secretary of the American Music Center in New York City, which post he held for over a dozen years.

Perhaps Ray Green's most striking achievement during his years with the American Music Center was the development, in collaboration with the Ford Foundation of a commissioning series, which during 1957-63 resulted in multiple performances of newly composed American works by a half-dozen participating orchestras. Indeed, Composers Recordings, Inc. was enabled through this program to produce five LPs (CRI 151, 152, 153, 155, 156) with four of the participating orchestras devoted to works from the series.

As composer, the titles of Ray Green's works bespeak his preoccupation with American dialect in terms of music, whether through evocation of hymn tune, country dance, or folk legend. *Three Inventories of Casey Jones*, Jig Theme and Six Changes, *Country Dance* Symphony, *Sunday Sing* Symphony are typical instances in point — though he has also composed a non-subtitled Violin Concerto as well as *Concerto Brevis* for Violin and Orchestra.

Green completed his *Sunday Sing* Symphony in 1946, but the work was a long time in coming to its world premiere (though a recording was issued on the American Recording Society label in 1953). But when the premiere did come, in 1961, it was under more than usually spectacular circumstances: As part of the Convention of the National Federation of Music Clubs at Kansas City, Missouri (at which Green was awarded a special citation), the Kansas City Philharmonic under Hans Schwieger performed *Sunday Sing* to choreography by modern dancer May O'Donnell.

Of *Sunday Sing*, Ray Green tells us that the name is derived “from the fact that characteristics similar to those found in early American modal 'shaped note' music are detectable in the fabric of the work. Influences of early American fuguing tune and hymn tune music are also to be found in its thematics. The name derived equally from the "Sunday Sings" of early America, a custom which is still kept alive in communities throughout the United States. . It is common practice for these "Sunday Sings" to be carried on with a minimum of formal leadership. Members of the group are free to suggest a hymn or spiritual and the volunteer of such a suggestion often directs the song of his or her choice. . . .

“The *Sunday Sing* Symphony does not attempt to capture or recreate the atmosphere of a "Sunday Sing," nor is the work programmatic or descriptive. It is based rather on the idea than on the substance of the "Sunday Sing.”

1. FUGUING TUNE —“The work opens with an introduction which leads into the fuguing tune itself. The first theme of the Introduction (solo clarinet) is lyrical and soaring in character and becomes an important factor in the following fuguing tune. The second theme of the introduction is like a hymn tune. The fuguing tune is a lusty *allegro*. .

2. HYMN TUNE NO. 1 —*Help Me to Sing*—“The title of this and the two other hymn tunes of the *Sunday Sing* Symphony are self-descriptive. This movement is simple in form and its melodic contour is broadly singing in style. . .

3. HYMN TUNE NO. 2 — *Help Me to Quietude* —“The quiet mood of this movement is suggested by the muted strings which serve as background for the solo instruments. The second section, marked 'fervently,' contrasts with the calm of the opening and closing of the movement. . . .

4. HYMN TUNE NO. 3 — *Help Me to Joy* — “A spirit of lively animation pervades this movement. The contour and motion of the tune suggests a lively folk dance, in keeping with the character of much of the early American hymn tune music which moves with a sturdy joyousness.

5. EXIT TUNE — “A few slow, solemn measures lead into a section based on thematics found in the introduction to the first movement. This goes on to a lively march based on variants of these same thematics. The march then leads into a vigorous section based on material which is found for the most part in the opening fuguing tune. A recapitulation leads into a final hymnlike tune which is followed by a repeat of the opening introduction. This, as at the end of the first movement, brings the work to a quiet, devotional close.”

NOTES BY DAVID HALL

DAVID VAN VACTOR (b. Plymouth, Ind., 1906), like many other composers, had at first no intention of becoming a professional musician, much less a composer. His boyhood was spent in northern Indiana, and it was in the town of Argos that he was taught to play the flute by the town barber. He was a member of the town band and by the composer's own admission it is probably this contact with bands and their music which accounts for the fact that so many of his works contain spirited marches.

After three years as a pre-medical student at Northwestern University Van Vactor entered the School of Music of that institution. Upon graduating he went to Vienna, where he studied flute with Josef Niedermayr. In 1931 he became a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, with which organization he remained for thirteen years. Soon after joining the orchestra Van Vactor spent a summer in Paris, studying composition with Paul Dukas and flute with Marcel Moyse. From 1936 to 1943 he was a member of the faculty of Northwestern University, teaching theory and conducting a chamber orchestra. Following this he went to Kansas City, where he held the position of assistant conductor of the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra. During his stay in Kansas City he was also head of the department of theory and composition at the Conservatory of Music. While in that city he founded the Allied Arts Orchestra for performance of works for chamber orchestra, with special emphasis upon contemporary music.

In 1947 Van Vactor founded the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Tennessee, and was appointed conductor of the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, which group, under his direction, has recorded several contemporary works for CRI John Boda's *Sinfonia*, Gilbert Trythall's Symphony No. 1 (CRI 155) and Robert Sander's Symphony in A (CRI 156).

In 1941 he toured Latin America as a member of the North American Woodwind Quintet, and in 1945 and 1946 he was guest conductor of the orchestra of Rio de Janeiro and Santiago. During his visits to the latter city he was on the faculty of the Universidad de Chile. Upon several occasions in recent years he has conducted European orchestras — the Philharmonic in London and the Palmengarten and Jugend Symphonic orchestras in Frankfurt am-Main. Van Vactor's association with the latter group, in 1958, was in connection with a Fulbright research grant, awarded for the purpose of discovering, under controlled conditions, comparative reactions of school children to educational concerts — a test conducted in Knoxville and in Frankfurt.*

Van Vactor's First Symphony, in D, was awarded the New York Philharmonic-Symphony prize in 1939, in spite of which happy occurrence he refrained from work in this medium until 1955. In that year he composed the first three movements of the Second Symphony. The pressure of numerous commitments delayed completion of the fourth movement for two years, although it had been sketched out along with the other movements. Van Vactor's Second Symphony was first performed by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, April 3, 1959, under the direction of William Steinberg. The structure and thematic material of the work can be summarized as follows:

I. ALLEGRO MODERATO, C major, 2/4. Violins present the main idea at once, and without accompaniment — a subject whose quiet nonchalance scarcely foreshadows the forceful march-tune into which it is speedily transformed.



After a noisy climax the second subject is put forth by flute and bassoon, with light accompaniment.



There is the proper classical contrast between first and second subjects — observe the lyric line of the second. But this tune is nothing more than the first subject inverted and augmented. Soon afterward a muted trumpet presents the third subject.



Although the casual listener ought not, perhaps, to be plagued with these technicalities, it should be pointed out for the benefit of those who listen analytically that the three repeated notes at the beginning of this trumpet subject become the head of the main theme of the second movement, and a rhythmic motive which is of great importance in that section of the symphony. (This relationship is not surprising, since, to quote the composer, “the whole first movement serves as an introduction to the main body of the symphony, the second movement.”)

The development section presents all three ideas separately and in combination, and the recapitulation is ushered in with several repetitions of the three-note motive mentioned above.

II. ADAGIO, *F* major, 4/4. Following several introductory measures the first subject is set forth by the violins. The three-note motive mentioned earlier will of course be heard, but notice also the downward leap of a seventh (sometimes major, sometimes minor).



The second subject in this three-part form is heard in the flute, against an accompaniment founded upon the repeated-note motive.



The interval of the descending seventh is heard in this theme also—in fact, there is a strong resemblance between the two themes.

III. ALLEGRETTO, *E* minor, 2/2. Though not so marked in the score, the third movement is a gavotte.



IV. ALLEGRO GIUSTO, *C* major, 6/8. The composer refers to this movement as a "big jig", combining elements of rondo form and of two-part form. Indeed, in broad outline the movement corresponds to the typical jig of the Baroque period—in which it was customary to invert the single theme at the beginning of the second section, turning it right side up again near the end of the movement. However, this movement might just as easily be identified as a rondo, in which the principal theme, having been heard at the beginning is then repeated after presentation of each new subject. The general plan of the large rondo can be diagrammed A B A C A B A. The present rondo, however, has yet another subsidiary, a manifestation of the form infrequently encountered. The main subject is this



which looks like this in its inverted form



- NOTES BY GEORGE F. DE VINE

*A small volume—Van *Vactor* and Moore: THAT EVERY CHILD MAY HEAR (University of Tennessee Press, 1960)—sets forth the conclusions drawn from this experiment.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)