

# Symphony for Winds

by Martin Ellerby

*Symphony for Winds* was commissioned by Kent Youth Wind Orchestra (Music Director: Alan Hutt) and the Bromley Youth Concert Band (Music Director: Peter Mawson) with funds provided by South East Arts, KYWO, BYCB and BASBWE. The first performance, given by the Kent Youth Wind Orchestra, conducted by Rodney Winther, took place at Benenden School, Kent on 14th July 1997. Both commissioning bands played the work at the 16th BASBWE Conference held at the University of Kent, Canterbury during September 1997. The US première, given by CCM Wind Symphony, conducted by Rodney Winther, took place in the Corvett Auditorium, College- Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati on 2nd December 1997. The work has since been revised prior to its recent publication.

The title *Symphony for Winds* was suggested by the commissioning bodies and was seen by the composer as a challenge to produce a work that exploited the wide range of colours and dynamics available within the contemporary wind ensemble in the manner of a large-scale orchestral symphony. The employment of much percussion and additional use of piano, harp and celesta were to provide even further riches of timbre. The work is cast in three movements and lasts a little under twenty minutes. It is dedicated to Sir Malcolm Arnold on the occasion of his 75th birthday, with affection and gratitude for his own music, which has been so influential on mine.

In the first movement (*Allegro energico*), 'Tribute', two highly contrasting moods, one rhythmic and aggressive, the other calm and relaxed, yet both in the same tempo, compete with each other to dominate the structure. The first subject is always in search of a theme (only realised partially at the conclusion), whereas the second always has one, but extends and develops it on each recurrence. I took the 7th Symphony of Malcolm Arnold as a spur to write this movement, hence the subtitle. Both works now share what I describe as the 'football-chant' motive, an essentially rhythmic idea that acts as a ritornello throughout. Example 1 shows

how Arnold presents his in the first movement of his 7th Symphony, whilst Example 2 gives my adaptation of this cell, from which rather more elaborated version, the melodic lines of the first subject are fashioned.

The first subject opens the movement with a pithy idea derived from the chant harmony (Example 3), eventually gaining the profile of a melodic line illustrated by Example 4.

The second subject is a warm line, built on wide intervals that provide the basis for Arnold's own second theme (Example 5), although much more my own in this instance (Example 6). The backing harmony is also of Arnold's sound-world, with a prevalence of major 7th chords in lilting support.

All the ensuing material is derived from these ideas, using a symphonic approach to first movement form, culminating in a tumultuous close using full forces.

In the central slow movement (*Lento con rubato*), 'Chorale', a series of chorales in a simple, direct idiom, provides an aura of calm between the outer, more aggressive movements. Instrumental colour, soft dynamics and much use of tuned percussion, including celesta, are of paramount importance. The first melodic idea is announced by tutti flutes, in their lowest, most resonant octave (Example 7) and provides an introduction to the clarinet entry.

This theme is now presented much more in the style of a chorale (Example 8).

These two opening ideas are taken up by other families of instruments, which eventually results in the appearance of a third, new idea — a second subject proper — in the higher expressive register of a solo oboe (Example 9).

Essentially contrapuntal in design throughout, the various themes are shared, developed and presented in different guises and close as softly as the movement began. Despite its surface simplicity, this movement provides a whole gamut of problems for the performing ensemble.

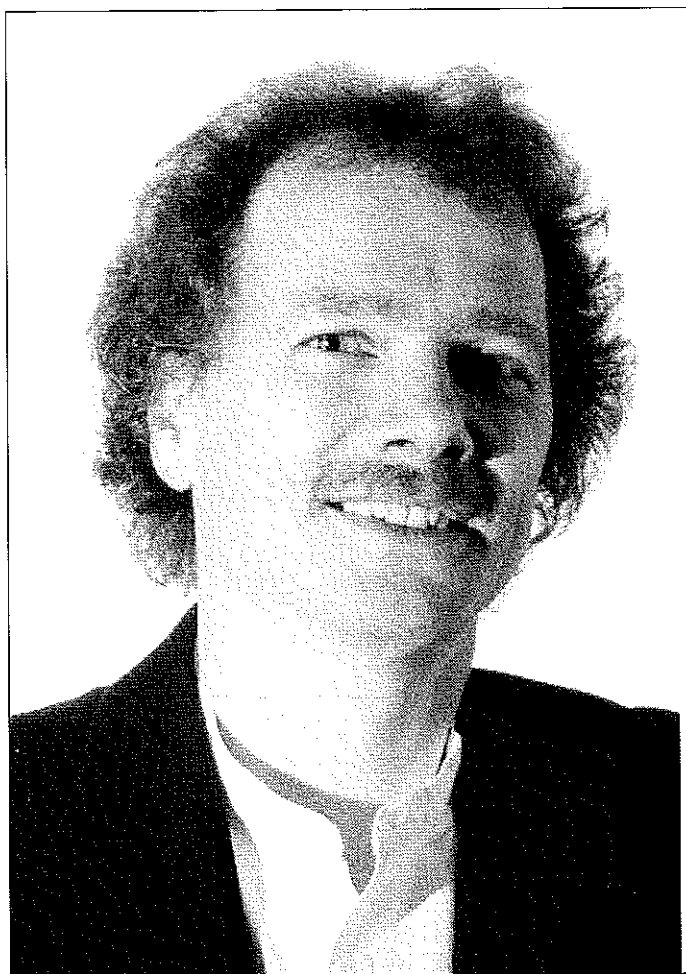
The finale (*Presto*), 'Display', is a highly charged, dynamic scherzo contrasting tutti writing with more subtle combinations of instruments. Based on the principles of scales and arpeggios, although adapted, melody is always endeavouring to be 'part of the chase'. This is rather like a miniature 'concerto for orchestra'. Arnold's favourite major 7th chord provides a starting point for the first round of dovetailed arpeggiations (Example 10), which is the source of all further developments throughout the movement.

All sections of the orchestra are given the opportunity to 'show off their dexterity, either in subtle passages or aggressive interludes, and the whole escapade results in a full and boisterous conclusion

It is to be acknowledged that *Symphony for Winds* requires an ensemble of high and equal calibre to deliver a convincing performance. I hope that it is a challenging contribution to the repertoire and with the passing of time will become manageable by an increasing number of bands and ensembles.

The work has been recorded by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force conducted by Wing Commander Rob Wiffin on Polyphonic QPRM 129D 'Great British Music for Wind Band - Volume 5'. I am grateful to Studio Music Company for permission to use quotations from *Symphony for Winds* for this article. The quotations from Sir Malcolm Arnold's *7th Symphony* are reproduced by kind permission of Faber Music Ltd, London.

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Martin Ellerby's works for wind bands and ensembles consist of both concert works and concertos and are, in chronological order: *Four Miniatures for Wind Quintet* (1980), *Tuba Concerto* (1988), *Paris Sketches* (1994), *Euphonium Concerto* (1994/95), *Dona Nobis Pacem* (1995), *New World Dances* ((1996), *Symphony for Winds* (1997), *Venetian Spells* (1997) and *Divertimento for Wind Dectet* (1998/99). He is currently writing *Scenes from Provence* for Hertfordshire Music School's wind ensemble, a grade two work for Stockport Grammar School's wind band and a *Clarinet Concerto* for Linda Merrick's forthcoming CD of concertos with wind orchestra. He is Head of Composition and Contemporary Music at the London College of Music & Media, and Visiting Professor to the Royal Air Force Music Services.

## Introduction and Escapades by David Burridge

This is a great little concert filler, full of rhythmic vitality and enough of a challenge to stretch the soloists of a good county band. Certainly the Kent Youth Wind Orchestra enjoyed both working with the composer and performing the piece. The 'Introduction', marked *Misterioso* and *Maestoso* develops from simple contrary motion chords in the clarinets and saxophones with flourishes from both upper woodwind and percussion. Gradually the theme broadens, the dynamic grows and the rhythms become more assertive.

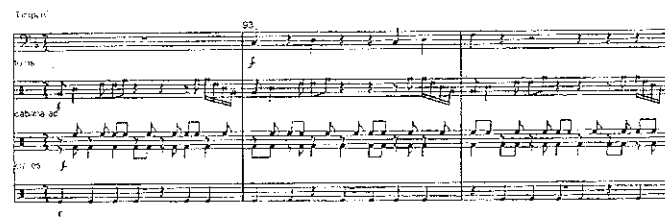


leading effectively into the 'Escapades'. These begin at a gallop, staccato stabs from the brass punctuating a lively, syncopated 4 bar phrase.

This is repeated throughout the band with some nice variations in texture and rhythm before we are led into a most attractive 4+3 meter section. There is terrific interest for the percussion section, which includes timpani, 3 players and a piano.



The composer has indicated a 'Jazz feel' but the quavers remain even, the soloists need only to follow what is written and the mood is guaranteed. The first alto sax player, who doubles on soprano sax for this solo, begins and is eventually joined by the solo trumpet in duet.



The euphonium and tenor sax take up the melody, one that really gets under your skin; everyone on our course ended up whistling the tune.

The *Escapades* continue with plenty of variation, everyone is employed and there is no time to relax until the 'Introduction' returns in a broader



palate with the 'Escapades' continuing to make their presence felt. The finale is beautifully orchestrated with big film-like scoring. A triumphant final chord brings to a close a piece that will put a smile on the face of the most reluctant of concert goers.

*Introduction and Escapades* by David Burridge 6'30", grade 4  
Score and Parts available from the composer at £45.00  
tel 01304 812 681 dburridge@bigfoot.com