1989

Symphony No. 1. (Original Composition);

Mickie Denver Willis

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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Symphony No. 1. [Original music]

Willis, Mickie Denver, D.M.A.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1989
SYMPhONY NO. 1

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by

Mickie D. Willis
B.M., University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1976
M.M., Louisiana State University, 1977
May 1989
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ABSTRACT

The goal in composing this Symphony was to produce a large scale work which would have the power, impact, and audience appeal of a late Romantic orchestral work but which employed some twentieth century techniques. The effort was to produce a composition which would not only display accomplished compositional craft but, upon performance, would generate immediate audience enthusiasm.

A great deal of idiomatic diversity was used in the piece to produce a broad and varied sound experience. In much the same way that a film score is composed, this piece was crafted using whatever tonal, orchestral or stylistic treatment would produce the desired mood. This includes impressionism, contemporary jazz harmonies and pure atonality. The piece is unquestionably dramatic but is in no way programmatic.

The degree of variety in the work is too great to be organized in a continuous single movement. Therefore the piece was cast in five distinct movements, each with specific character and position in the overall form. The movements progress from rhythmic and tonal simplicity towards much more complexity and back to simplicity, with the central movement being the pinnacle of a large arch form.

The composition represents an attempt to create a musical experience that is emotionally stimulating and enjoyable as well as being intellectually satisfying.
The goal in composing this symphony was to create a large symphonic work which would feature a great variety of styles as well as the usual contrasts of tempo, texture, and mood found in major orchestral works. Because of its length and the diversity involved, considerable attention was given to formal and structural elements of the piece. The Symphony is not programmatic and so must have its own direction. To this end, the piece is a giant arch which moves from a very conservative style to much freer use of all compositional elements and back toward more conservative sounds.

The Symphony features five related movements, though quite contrasting in style and mood. The first and fifth, both allegros, are most alike harmonically and rhythmically. The second and fourth, both slow movements, also form a pair of similar movements which contrast with the two allegros and with the central movement which is the most complex, rhythmically, melodically, and harmonically. Because of the variety present among these movements, there was no need to vary tonal centers from movement to movement. They are all centered around D. The first and last are clearly in D minor. The second and fourth are centered around D as well but are less definite. The third movement is atonal but has a high proportion of D's in its pitch content. In the second and fourth movements the absence of clear cadences, tonic-dominant relationships, and leading
tones suggests a sense of modality. The fourth movement more strongly suggests major-minor tonality than the second, not because of the leading tone present in the fourth movement, but because of the prominent use of the subdominant chord and the relative major triad. The third movement is freely atonal and relies more on texture, motivic content, and rhythm for coherence than on tonality. The regression from and progression towards clear tonality is an element in the arch form of the work as a whole. Another element is the sharing of thematic materials between the first and last movements, and to a much lesser extent, the first and third. The specifics of this will be discussed as each movement is treated.

First (I) Movement

The first movement opens with a three-note motive which clearly outlines D. It is followed by three descending three-note diatonic figures, repeated at successively higher pitch levels to form the first full phrase of the composition.

Example 1. Measures 1-3, First Movement

A secondary motive which first appears at measure fourteen is an inversion of the three descending diatonic notes found in the opening phrase.
In this case the motive is used in a four-voice canon in the strings.

Four measures later it is used in its retrograde form.

A variation of this phrase is the basis for an answering canon in the woodwinds starting at measure 21.
Notice that in this appearance the ascending three notes are varied by the inclusion of a lower neighboring-tone figure. An approximation of the opening phrase shown in example 1 appears in augmented note values as a countermelody in the trumpets beginning at measure 17 and is imitated canonically but with even longer note values in the flutes two measures later.

Starting at measure 31 this phrase is ornamented with four repeated sixteenth notes, a rhythmic motif which occurred in the first measure in the timpani and will also be used in the third movement.
This repeated three-note motive which first appears at measure 18 is related to the opening motive of the movement in that they are rhythmically identical.

Example 6. Measure 18, First Movement

The three-note anacrusis preceding three descending diatonic pitches found in measure 19 will be used to precede a descending chromatic scale in the last movement.

Example 7. Measure 19, First Movement

Also at measure 22 a motive first appears in first and second violins which will be used extensively and throughout the orchestra as the primary motive of the last movement.

Example 8. Measures 22-24, First Movement
In this appearance of the theme the descending chromatic scale is preceded by a long sustained note. Throughout the last movement the long held note is replaced by repeated notes, many times the anacrusis shown in example 6. A rhythmic figure shown in the example below from measure 30 is a portion of the phrase shown in example 6. It will become one of the two main motives of the last movement.

Example 9. Measure 30, First Movement

In this example it is used as the rhythm for a passage of imitation between the cellos and string basses. This rhythmic figure is joined with the three descending notes of the opening motive to form this phrase in the violins at measure 47.

Example 10. Measures 47-48, First Movement

Formal organization of this movement is a simple A ||: B A :||. "A" is the introduction of themes up through measure 13. The "B" part is the very limited development and introduction of new material which is to appear in the last movement. This begins at
measure fourteen and continues through measure 43 where the opening motive is heard in the first violins. It is not a literal recapitulation however and is accompanied by two themes which are to be heard again in the last movement, one example of which was shown in example 10.

Example 11 from measures 51-52 combines the repeated three-note anacrusis mentioned in example 6, the quarter followed by two eighth-notes rhythm shown in example 9 with the descending chromatic line shown in example 8.

Example 11. Measures 51-52, First Movement

This combining of motives, normally thought of as part of the development in a work, is occurring here during the recapitulation. This illustrates the fact that the recapitulation is not a literal one. The entire development and recapitulation are repeated but are written out for the conductor’s convenience.

Second (II) Movement

The second movement is less clearly motivic than the previous movement. In this movement the melodic figures are derived from the pitch content D-E-F-C-A-B\textsuperscript{b}. Notice that this pattern forms a hexatonic scale which is an aeolian mode on D but without the 7th scale degree. The harmonies in this movement are generally some combination of three sets of minor thirds: D-F, E-G, G-B\textsuperscript{b}. In many cases
however, sonorities are products of linear melodic motion. There are no traditional harmonic cadences and no functional harmonic relationships.

There are three main elements in this movement which are alternated in a rondo-like pattern: a running eighth-note figure which has an ostinato function (to provide a sense of continuous motion), short melodic fragments of very limited range, and cadential vertical harmonies composed of combinations of the previously mentioned pairs of minor thirds and densities resulting from melodic motion. There is some motivic relationship to the first movement in the prominence of minor thirds and diatonic steps used in this movement, both harmonically and melodically.

The movement opens with the ostinato-like pattern in the harp. It utilizes all of the pitches which will occur throughout the movement. It accompanies only sustained tones at first. At measure nine, the first vertical sonority appears which is not a result of melodic motion (E-G). At this point the harp figure shifts to strings where it is distributed among the violins, violas, and cellos. This figure returns to the harp again at measure 12, back to the strings at measure 14, and stops at measure 16 with a cadence on a chord formed from a $B^b$ major triad with the added cluster of F-G-A-G. After this point the first full melodic statements are heard. Notice these phrases from measures 17 through 20, shown in order of their appearance:
Example 12. Measures 17-18, Second Movement

This is answered by:

Example 13. Measures 18-19, Second Movement

This phrase enters next:

Example 14. Measures 18-19, Second Movement

It is answered by:

Example 15. Measures 19-20, Second Movement

Except for the first two, which are truly imitative, the phrases are only similar in general characteristics. However, the four form an
antecedent-consequent-antecedent-consequent phrase group terminating in a melodic cadence at measure 20.

Further use of this kind of imitative writing can be seen between the first and second violins at measure 23, followed by cellos and trumpets one measure later, followed by flutes in the next measure, then oboes and violas, and finally violins, trombones, and cellos to end another four-phrase group at measure 27. At this point, melodic development is interrupted by the recurring harp figure.

Throughout the second movement there is a tendency to use only minor thirds and diatonic steps for both melodies and harmonies. A melody doubled at the unison and octave in the first and second violins and first oboe and first clarinet begins at measure 33 and terminates in a protracted cadence involving most of the orchestra at measures 35 through 37. Contrapuntal texture begins again at measure 39 and builds with slowly moving voices in imitation and near-imitation of the type already illustrated. The melodic voices end on a polychord (a D minor triad sounding with an E diminished triad) and conclude the movement.

For purposes of formal discussion the "A" part is the ostinato-like eighth-note figure played by the harp or strings, the cadential areas consist of the purely harmonic intervals, and the "B" part is formed by the melodies (sometimes imitative, sometimes not). A synopsis of the rondo-like form is shown in the example below.
Measures

1 - 16 A
" 16 Cadence
" 17 - 20 B
" 21 - 23 Cadence
" 24 - 26 B
" 27 - 35 A and B
" 36 - 38 Cadence
" 39 - 45 B

Example 16. Formal diagram, Second Movement

Third (III) Movement

In all compositional aspects, the third movement is by far the most complex of the entire piece. This movement is essentially a series of nonperiodic continuous variations which are derived from this one long phrase:

Example 17. (From composer's sketches)

and from these harmonic intervals:
Example 18. (From composer's sketches)

and their inversions.

Example 19. (From composer's sketches)

The compound formations of these (major and minor ninths, etc.) are also used. The phrase shown in example 17 is the material for melodic variation while the harmonic intervals of example 19 are used as chords and clusters which occur throughout the movement in a variety of combinations and voicings.

The movement opens with the repeated sixteenth-note figure heard at the beginning of the first movement. Quickly following this a harmonic cluster appears which is composed from the intervals of examples 18 and 19. At measures three and four the repeated sixteenth-note figure is repeated three times signalling the first statement of the melodic phrase shown in example 17. This material is distributed throughout the orchestra in a fragmented, pointillistic way. At measure five the horns and trumpets play the first four notes (the last two of which occur simultaneously).
Example 20. Measure 5, Third Movement

The oboe quickly picks up the next five notes. Notice the pivotal note (D) which is the last note of the horn phrase and the first note of the oboe phrase.

Example 21. Measure 5, Third Movement

The cellos play the next six notes.

Example 22. Measures 6-7, Third Movement
The piccolo plays the next three notes.

Example 23. Measures 7–8, Third Movement

The last two notes (B and D) of the primary theme were played by the trombones two measures earlier.

Example 24. Measure 6, Third Movement

The treatment shown here is fairly typical; the sequence of pitches of some part of the opening phrase is retained as well as the basic melodic contours. However, different segments of the primary theme are stated as solos or tutti phrases in a fragmented way. In a few cases, however, the material has been treated so freely that the varied phrase bears little resemblance to any part of the primary theme, as can be seen from this horn phrase in measure nine.

Example 25. Measure 9, Third Movement
There are four main distinctive rhythms that are used throughout the movement: a quarter-note triplet figure almost always occurring as a descending motive, usually by skips (an obvious link to the opening motive of the piece).

![Example 26. Measure 7, Third Movement](image)

A quarter-note quadruplet rhythm, a quarter-note quintuplet rhythm, and a quarter-note septuplet rhythm are the other most prominent rhythmic figures. The rhythms are combined with different pitches from the primary phrase to produce phrases of similar contours and rhythm but different pitches and intervals. Compare the piccolo phrase shown in example 23 with this phrase one measure later in the first oboe.

![Example 27. Measure 8, Third Movement](image)

Not only are the variations in this movement produced by combining different segments of the main theme with different rhythms and scattering them throughout the orchestra; the method of presenting the varied phrases is also subject to variation. Sometimes a phrase may be stated as a solo, another time it may be doubled by many
instruments or a whole section. Compare this example in which the
melodic line is played by first flute and first oboe only,

Example 28. Measures 31 and 32, Third Movement

with this example in which the same phrase is doubled by almost the
entire woodwind section except piccolo and with the addition of
first and second trumpets.
In many other cases the identifying melodic contours of a previously heard phrase and/or one of the main rhythmic motifs already mentioned are retained but different pitch segments of the original main phrase are used in each voice to create a giant "moving cluster" as in this example.
Example 30. Measures 25-27, Third Movement

In this example scattering of different pitches throughout many instrumental voicings creates a harmonic density out of melodic motion. In many other cases the vertical densities are composed with only harmonic considerations in mind and bear little resemblance to any melodies in the movement. The following example is a good illustration of what might be termed a "static dissonance" as opposed to the "moving" type shown in example 30.
Example 31. Measures 62-63, Third Movement

The static dissonances are sometimes used with melodic statements as a kind of accompaniment. In many other cases they are alternated with the solo and tutti melodies to form cadences which punctuate melodic variation.

One other compositional technique that is used in this movement is imitative counterpoint. In much the same way that the just mentioned static dissonances punctuate melodic variation, canons are also used to vary the movement. The first of these occurs at measures 33 through 40 in the string section.
Example 32. Measures 33-34, Third Movement

This is a double canon in which viola imitates first violin and cello imitates second violin. The voices of this canon are composed of pitches which before had been used only as simultaneously sounding vertical clusters. Another short imitative statement between first and second horns and first and second trombones begins at measure 39.

Example 33. Measures 39-40, Third Movement
In this case the imitation is not literal and is subject to some variation. Whereas the second note of the first voice (G) is repeated by octave displacement, the third note of the second voice (E^b) is repeated by octave displacement. These phrases form an interlude (from measures 33 to 43), after which melodic variation and harmonic cadences continue more decisively stated than before.

Just as elements of melodic variation were juxtaposed vertically to create densities as shown in example 30, the reverse procedure was used to create linear melodies from material which had previously been used only for vertical sonorities.

Example 34. Measures 55-56, Third Movement
This procedure continues through measure 60 and ends in a dissonant
cadence at measures 61 and 62.

Although the compositional procedures in this movement are
largely those of variation, the formal organization is a broad A || B |
coda. The cadence at measures 61 and 62 terminates the A part of this
movement, and might be considered the apex of the arch form of the
entire work.

After measure 62 the style and texture are dominated by counter-
point involving long legato descending phrases which were composed
from the reordered pitches of the original melodic phrase of this
movement as shown in example 17. The counterpoint among the woodwinds,
horns, and trumpets from measure 63 through 72 is what might be
described as "temporal density," that is, the superimposition of
several different, relatively unrelated rhythms. Up to this point in
the movement rhythms have been clearly delineated. Here, the overall
rhythm is purposely obscured to give added impact to the end of the
movement.

The short coda begins at measure 80 (after the fermata) with the
same percussion figure that opens the movement. The purpose of the
coda is to provide some sense of familiarity if not true recapitula-
tion in an unclear form with complex musical ideas. To this end,
five of the most prominent phrases of the movement are clearly
restated, each in turn, in unambiguous antecedent-consequent fashion,
as a conclusion to the movement.
Fourth (IV) Movement

The fourth movement is the simplest of the piece, merely a series of melodic phrases accompanied by an ostinato throughout. Although this movement is basically in D minor, the lack of leading tones, dominant relationships, or clear cadences causes more a sense of impressionistic modality than of clear tonality. Tonic/subdominant relationships are most important, however the mediant relationship (D-F) is also quite prevalent.

In this movement more than in any other there are clear sustained chord formations. In many cases added tones (6ths, 9ths) have been used for coloristic purposes but do not affect the root of the sustained sonority.

It is not appropriate to discuss musical content in this movement in terms of motivic development or relationships. However some motivic continuity between this and other movements can be seen. For example, the three-note ostinato figure heard throughout this movement, often outlining (or at least partially defining) the prevailing harmony has an obvious connection to the three-note motive that opened the composition (see example 1).

The melodies throughout are simple ascending and descending diatonic lines. The rhythm of these phrases, a half note followed by two quarter notes, is an augmentation of the rhythmic motif shown in example 9 which occurs in both the first and last movements.

Formally, this movement is a series of antecedent and consequent melodic phrases with no development. If a pattern must be defined it would have to be a simple A B C or A B with short coda.
Following this analysis the "A" part would extend to measure 37 and
display a basic archlike curve of short phrases of increasing length
and energy to measure 24, then diminishing in length and intensity by
measure 37. At measure 38 a "B" part appears, defined at first by the
predominance of a tonal center on C and by a different rhythmic
pattern in the melody.

Example 35. Measures 37-38, Fourth Movement

This is the first phrase of the "B" part and uses eighth notes for
the first time in this movement. This melodic style continues through
measure 51 after which a "C" part or coda appears. This part consists
melodically of three-note ascending and descending diatonic phrases
and functions more like a protracted cadence than as a substantially
different section. There is a brief reprise of G minor at measures
61 through 64 and a return to F major at measure 65 through the end
of the movement at measure 74.

Fifth (V) Movement

The fifth movement is a finale with the fastest tempo and most
relentless melodic reiteration of the piece. The primary theme opens,
not fully stated, but as a segment of a chromatic scale which expands
to a full octave by measure 16.
Example 36. Measures 15-16, Fifth Movement

This descending chromatic phrase is accompanied by a countermelody which begins as a three note broken chord figure which is clearly similar to the opening motive of the first movement (see example 1). This countermelody develops into a motive which in addition to the phrase shown in example 36 is the other main motive of this movement.

Example 37. Measure 8, Fifth Movement

This opening statement of themes requires 18 measures and terminates in a cadence on D.

At measure 39, a third, contrasting motive begins the third phrase section and is related to the motive shown in example 2 from the first movement.
Example 38. Measures 39-40, Fifth Movement

This begins what might be called the development, since it combines elements of the material presented thus far in the movement. This period of development extends for 18 measures, ending on a melodic cadence on F in bar 56. At measure 57 another phrase section begins, and another melodic cadence punctuates the development 20 bars later at measure 76, this time on D.

Measures 77 through 94 are melodically identical to 39 through 56, but with different harmonic backgrounds. Whereas the first appearance of this section implies dominant-seventh harmony at measure 47, the second appearance remains in D minor through the corresponding location at measure 85. This same theme is transposed to C when it appears next at measure 103, and with the B natural implies a brief turn toward C with a cadence on A at measure 113. The rhythmically reiterated A from measure 113 through 134 is the major feature of an interlude which occurs between the development and the recapitulation.

A recapitulation at measure 135 begins by outlining the opening phrases of the movement. The secondary theme appears at measure 143 on D and the section ends after 18 bars where the secondary theme is transposed to the dominant (A). The last section ends in a long
descending chromatic approach to the final cadence on D minor. There is a repeat of the last four bars of this section before the final cadence is heard.

The basic form of the movement is A B A. The "A" part extends through measure 38. The long development section (B) extends from measure 39 through 134 and involves the restatement and transposition of materials to other pitch levels as discussed in the preceding paragraphs. At measure 135 the recapitulation begins and continues through the end of the piece at measure 180.

There is an alternation of section lengths involved in this movement. The first exposition of phrases requires 18 measures. The second phrase section requires 20 measures to complete. This alternation of 18 with 20-bar sections occurs consistently until measure 94. From measures 95 through 134 two adjacent 20-bar sections occur. This area might also be analyzed as two adjacent 18-bar sections separated by four bars of interlude (measures 113-116). After this all sections are 18 bars in length except for the section from measures 153 through 176 which is a 20-bar section with four bars repeated. There is a short four-bar coda or extended cadence. A synopsis of the alternation of 18 with 20-bar sections is as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{A} & = & \text{18 Bar Section} \\
\text{B} & = & \text{20 Bar Section} \\
\text{Measures} & & 1 - 18 \\
\text{Exposition} & & 19 - 38 \\
\end{array}
\]
The primary motive (the long descending chromatic line shown in example 36) or some variant of it is most often voiced in unison or octaves with several doublings. However, near the end of the first part and throughout most of the development it is voiced in a variety of parallel harmonies. At measures 25 through 38 it moves in parallel fourths and/or fifths until it cadences at the end of the second phrase period. At measures 42 through 46 it moves in parallel minor sixths and/or major thirds. At measures 49 through 52 the interval is a tritone resolving to major thirds/minor sixths at measures 55 and 56 (the cadence of the third section). The next period begins in unison but quickly shifts to perfect fourths/fifths at measure 61, and then to minor thirds/major sixths at measure 63. At measure 67, owing to the staggered entrances, the intervals are minor thirds/ major sixths again with a return to unison/octave doublings at measure 71. Minor thirds/major sixths return briefly at measures 75.
and 76. Unison/octave doublings return after this and are heard until measure 160. At measure 161 the interval is a minor sixth (spelled as an augmented fifth) then another added major third (making a parallel augmented triad), followed by perfect fourths/fifths. The voicing returns to the augmented fifth followed by the second major third to form the augmented triad once again, and then to perfect fourths/fifths to end. These fairly rapid changes in parallel voicings take place in a matter of 15 measures and are a result of canonic imitation of the primary motive at various pitch levels.

It may seem at first that this piece displays an unlikely mixture of musical styles. However, I believe that owing largely to the electronic media availability of very diverse styles of music, audiences as well as composers have become much more eclectic in their tastes and that the incorporation of a variety of musical idioms in a single composition is not only acceptable but desirable. In this piece I endeavor to minimize the incongruities of stylistic juxtaposition, reinforce the common strengths of different idioms, and present such eclecticism in a coherent, sensible, and hopefully memorable composition.
INSTRUMENTATION

1 Piccolo
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 B♭ Clarinets
2 Bassoons
4 F Horns
4 B♭ Trumpets
4 Trombones
1 Tuba
Timpani (3)
Percussion I:
   Triangle, Finger Cymbal
   Suspended Cymbal
   Crash Cymbal
Percussion II:
   Snare Drum
   Tenor Drum
   Bass Drum
Violins I
Violins II
Violas
Cellos
String Basses
VITA

The composer was born on May 7, 1945 in Corpus Christi, Texas. He began playing trumpet at the age of twelve and played in various high school bands in Louisiana schools before graduation from Istrouma High School in 1965. Beginning in his early teens he played trumpet and later keyboard in touring rhythm and blues bands throughout the South, interrupting his high school studies for three years to do so. He attended LSU School of Music for three years and later received a B.M. degree in Theory-Composition from U.S.L. in Lafayette, Louisiana in 1976. He received his M.M. degree in Music composition from L.S.U. in 1977. Since 1980 he has worked intermittently on doctoral studies in composition. He has composed a large number of works including an oratorio, a symphonic song, one symphony, a one hour long electronic music composition for a commercial compact disc, three string quartets, several pieces for chamber ensembles, piano solos, many songs (both jazz and traditional) and one oboe sonata. Since 1975 he has taught private piano, served as choir director at several area catholic churches, and performed regularly as a solo jazz pianist and with a jazz combo. He is a member of Phi Kappa Lambda, and in 1978 was named Composer of the Year by the Louisiana M.T.N.A. with his four entries in the competition placing first, second, third, and fourth from over 35 entrants. His ultimate aspiration is to compose for films.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate:             Mickie D. Willis
Major Field:          Music
Title of Dissertation: SYMPHONY NO. 1

Approved:

[Signatures of Major Professor and Dean of the Graduate School]

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures of committee members]

Date of Examination:

June 24, 1988