THE CONSTRUCTION AND ORCHESTRATION

OF A COMPOSITION

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

THE CONSTRUCTION AND ORCHESTRATION OF A COMPOSITION

The problems arising in the conception, composing and perfecting of a composition may be divided into two types: (1) Those connected with the composition itself; and (2) Those pertaining to the interpretation of the moods and thematic variations of the composition by the orchestra.

The Composition

The first step in the work of this composition was to establish a broad outline of mood, sequence of themes and tempi, and general orchestral coloration. The general structure, partly pre-determined and partly augmented as the composition progressed, was: Theme A (viola); bridge; Theme A (violins); bridge; Theme B (cornet solo, immediately repeated by violins); Theme A, experiment or development; Theme B, experiment; Theme A, major variants; Theme B, variant in a major key; bridge; flute cadenza; and finally Theme A in a major variant.

The first theme is given in several forms of abbreviation, extension and inversion, nine of which are shown in Fig. 1.

1. B minor, original

![Musical notation image]


8. A Major, re-statement—modified.


Fig. 1.—Nine variants from Theme "A".

Although portions of the second theme (Fig. 2) occasionally
appear singly, it is given again in an important way only in the major restatement (Fig. 3).

Fig. 2.--Theme "B" in the original key of B minor.

Fig. 3.--Theme "B" variant in the key of D Major.

Primary interest in the composition is in the transition from minor tonality to major. Harmonically speaking, the composer used few chords of the dominant of the dominant, ninths, or chords of the 7th, relying mainly on the simpler transitions of the Tonic, Sub-Dominant and Dominant chords of related major and minor keys. Sometimes the dominant of the dominant was used as a pivot (Fig. 4).

\[ \begin{array}{ccc}
I & V^7 \text{ of } V & I \\
A \text{ Major} & A \text{ Major} & I \\
VII & V^7 & I \\
B \text{ minor} & A \text{ Major} & A \text{ Major}
\end{array} \]

Fig. 4.--The dominant of the dominant used as a pivot chord.

The notably comprehensive simplicity of the harmonic structure in measures 186-205 is relieved by the pedal-point, the changing voices
of the instruments (although the chords are repeated), and by a chromatic device suggested by Rimsky-Korsakov as a means of increasing the smoothness of cadences and enriching them. This figure was used by Saint-Saens in the accompaniment to the aria "Mon Coeur S'Ouvre A Ta Voix." Rimsky-Korsakov says:

Chromatic passing notes may be placed within a whole tone between two harmonic tones, or between diatonic passing notes. ¹

However, as there is a minimum of chord cadence in this passage, the chromatic figure is re-directed to the chord where it began.

The Orchestration

The instruments chosen for the interpretation of the composition are approximately those of a standard orchestra:

<table>
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<th>Woodwinds</th>
<th>Brasses</th>
<th>Percussion</th>
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<td>Flute</td>
<td>4 Horns in F</td>
<td>Tympani</td>
<td>Violins 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>2 Oboes</td>
<td>2 Bb Cornets</td>
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<td>2 Bb Clarinets</td>
<td>Tenor Trombone</td>
<td></td>
<td>Celli</td>
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<td>2 Bassoons</td>
<td>Bass Trombone</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bass</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The only novelty introduced is the Vibra-Harp, a percussion instrument of the marimba family but having metal bars, resonators, and electrically driven vibrators.

The instruments are used in a traditional manner. The double-reed instruments are used to emphasize dissonant passages, as the

low C sharp and B on the oboe in measures 19-24. The oboe is also used
to suggest such conceptions as impish challenge. For instance, the de-
velopment of the first theme, measures 90-91, is begun with a sprightly
piquancy that gives direction and continuity to the whole section. The
bassoons add a feeling of humor, measures 43-45, and are blended with
the cellos, measures 115-124, to provide a trace of the concept of lim-
itless space familiar to Wagner devotees. The clarinet offers a foun-
dation and accompaniment to the flute and strings because of its tone,
which is between the richness of the oboe and the simple clarity of
the cornet.

The bravado of the second theme, Con Bravura, could be expressed
only by the cornet, though a long solo passage for this instrument is
an oddity in orchestral music. The brasses generally have been handled
in an attempt to follow the ideas of Sibelius, Wagner and Beethoven,
expressing force, strength, firmness and determination—as in measures
148-165—or unvarying simplicity—measures 174-184. The horns are
used throughout the composition for accompaniment, and always as
brasses rather than woodwinds.

The string orchestra works almost continuously, enhancing the
feeling of motion and smoothness necessary in the accompaniments, as
in measures 69-89.

In addition to the customary supporting role to the basses, the
tympani have been provided with a cross-rhythm, measures 185-205,
which makes the statement of the second theme in a major key much more
interesting. The vibra-harp likewise emphasizes the unusual tone-
coloration of this same passage.
Classification of the Composition and Orchestration

The composition is of the Romantic type. Its melodies are somewhat long, and the harmonization is rendered coherent by frequent use of strong authentic cadences. The simple play of the two main themes should be obvious to the high school and college students for whom it is designed.

The orchestration is one of medium difficulty, demanding little from the virtuosity of the players. It is intended to be performed by a good high school or college orchestra, and while the double-sharps and E and B sharps dictated by the harmonic treatment may confuse some younger high school students, presentation of "Les Voyageurs" should require no greater effort than many other compositions freely used in contests and festivals.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books