

Alan Belkin, composer

THE SYMPHONIES OF DAVID DIAMOND: A LISTENER'S GUIDE

by Alan Belkin

David Diamond was my main composition teacher at Juilliard. This article was originally written for a Festschrift project, which was later abandoned.

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Introduction

David Diamond was a major American symphonist, with eleven works in the genre. Despite a succession of musical fads, Diamond steadfastly developed a symphonic style in a contemporary romantic idiom all his own.

Since many of Diamond's own program notes and much biographical information appear in the study by Victoria Kimberling¹, I will here adopt a somewhat more analytical approach. This survey is done from my own point of view as a symphonic composer; it constitutes a guided tour of each symphony's architectural construction. I have been forced to limit detailed study to symphonies one through eight, since the last three are neither published nor recorded (apart from one movement from the eleventh symphony).

First Symphony

Diamond's First Symphony dates from 1940-41 (although an earlier symphony is now archived as a student work, according to Victoria Kimberling). It is for a moderate sized orchestra, including tubular bells. However the piano, a very frequent presence in Diamond's orchestral works, is absent. The work is in three movements, and lasts about twenty minutes. It is dedicated to Katherine Anne Porter. Dimitri Mitropoulos conducted the première.

The first movement alternates between two of Diamond's most typical moods: an extremely driving and vigorous energy, immediately familiar to anyone who has met the man, and a more private, lyric strain.

The opening, *Allegro moderato con energia*, explores several modal colors around the tonic E and is based on the following germ motive.

ex. 1



This motive, at times extended, and with many stretto-like imitations, is led through various rhythmic shifts, while being punctuated regularly by the tubular bells striking the tonic. A first climax leads to a sustained line in the strings (m. 14 ff) which is accompanied by the germ motive, again with many imitations. An answering statement (m. 25), punctuated by occasional brass explosions - a gesture that will reappear frequently in Diamond's symphonies - grows in intensity to a climax in G Dorian over an ostinato bass (m. 60 ff). This leads in m. 68 to a sudden harmonic shift towards the sharp side of the harmonic spectrum, and the second theme (ex. 2). The latter has two components: an accented chord that leaves behind an "echo" in the winds, and a winding, lyrical trumpet line that grows out of ex. 1

ex. 2



The lyrical gesture is developed for awhile (m. 80 ff), eventually gets more emphatic, and recombines with ex. 1, to reach an impressive climax (m. 126-7). ex. 2 briefly

reappears, and we find ourselves in a reprise of the passage that began previously in m. 15. However now this leads to a lively development, (m. 184 ff) combining the various thematic elements. For the most part the rhythmic drive is ineluctable, but a lovely harmonic digression of rich chords in half notes (m. 206) provides a moment of quiet. The development continues and eventually works its way back (m. 225) into a recapitulation of the opening. The movement ends with a surprise: after an energetic scalar descent, two bassoons sound a last echo on the dominant, while the bells and pizzicato lower strings close with the tonic.

The second movement, *Andante mesto* (stet), is a long, generous cantilena, centered largely in the strings. The string writing is richly contrapuntal, in a style - calm melody moving along in dignified quarter and half notes over modal harmony with three or four intensely singing inner parts - that has a distinctly French flavor, recalling Diamond's revered Ravel, as well as Ravel's teacher Fauré.²

The bass to the first measure hints at ex. 1 above. Despite some modulatory shift (e.g. m. 34), and occasional added movement in eighth notes (e.g. m. 40), as well as a short digression in the winds (m. 68 ff), there is no major contrasting section in this movement. In fact, what is impressive here is the breadth of line, and the richness of harmony, created with fairly simple modal colors used with great sensitivity. The lovely final cadence is worthy of note: as the outer parts expand, a slowly rising scale in the middle parts arrives at a quiet peak, and the movement ends with a minor seventh chord on C. This kind of evolving modality (the movement began in G) will reappear in other symphonies.

The cyclic nature of the work will become even clearer in the final movement. This movement starts with a syncopated brass version of ex. 1, expanding into a richly scored *Maestoso* introduction, recalling the kind of texture that permeated the second movement.

There follows an *Allegro Vivo* (m. 54)³ that prefaces the syncopated variant of ex. 1 (originally seen in the brass) with a rushing, descending scale in sixteenth notes. This lively first theme is soon succeeded (m. 78) by a quieter second idea, over a more static bass (ex. 3).

ex. 3



This in turn leads to a lively developmental section, with much syncopation and tight imitation. The running scale figure of the main theme suddenly sets in motion a scurrying string figure (m. 111), which is used to accompany material from the second

idea. Various contrapuntal combinations of the second idea and outgrowths of ex. 1 follow.

The recapitulation starts in the middle of the first theme (m.153 ff = m. 64 ff), and brings back the second theme in its entirety.

The rushing sixteenths return over ex. 1 repeated in the bass, and this builds up to a full cyclic recapitulation, complete with bells, of m. 1-12 from the first movement, at their original pitch, but now with the bass on A instead of E. However the sixteenths return (m. 202 ff), and lead to the conclusion, where ex. 1 is repeated in various rhythms, over an A pedal.

Second Symphony

Diamond's Second Symphony, written in 1942-3, is one of his largest works, lasting slightly over forty minutes. It bears no dedication, and was first performed by the Boston Symphony under Serge Koussevitsky, in 1944.

The work shows Diamond experimenting with the number and order of movements: instead of the usual fast-slow-moderate-fast, the sequence is slow-fast-slow-fast, beginning with a huge Adagio funebre.

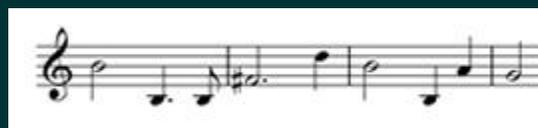
This first movement, in E, opens with austere low open fifths in low strings, supporting a rising line. Timpani and basses repeat a dotted note figure, ex. 4, (double diminution of the string motive) that remains stubbornly on the same two pitches, and becomes the source for much of the movement's material:

ex. 4



The phrase peaks with modulating chords, and settles over a pulsing bass line in repeated notes. A more sustained string line arrives in m. 11, in an austere, empty texture. This important theme, ex. 5, also makes prominent use of the dotted repeated note figure:

ex. 5



This broader theme is accompanied by an ostinato two note motive in the timpani, that dances below in unpredictable rhythmic positions. Strings pick up this somber melody (m. 111), which now develops at some length, with interruptions more in the character of the first theme. Apart from an occasional moment of stasis (m. 208 ff), there is always a strong forward momentum.

A recapitulation starts in m. 286, somewhat varied but containing both first and second themes. This reaches a climax in m. 442 on a resonant polychord, that is an outgrowth of the previous added note harmonies. In a surprise, the movement ends gently, cadencing on Bb, the same pitch with which it began.

The lovely *Andante espressivo*, *quasi Adagio* is slow, like the first movement, and (also like the latter) in E.

The main idea, based on ex. 4, is presented in low strings and bassoons. In m. 10 another important theme arrives in the clarinet; it again incorporates the characteristic dotted note rhythm:

ex. 8



The strings return, and shortly thin out into a solo line in the violins. An oboe solo now spins out the opening idea (m. 31) and its first half, with the dotted note figure augmented, is heard in dialogue between strings and winds. The stark empty texture heard in the first movement returns, with telling effect, in m. 52: violins sing out a line combining elements from ex. 4 and ex. 8, over brooding chords in low cellos and basses. The dialogue continues and leads to an imitative intensification in m. 78 ff. In m. 95 ff, the opening returns, orchestrated differently. This recapitulation is quite substantial, reaching a cadence in m. 150.

There follows another presentation of the ex. 8 clarinet theme, now very sonorous in strings and horns. A striding bass is added in steady eighth notes (m. 156), and the texture becomes more and more dense, leading to a climactic tutti, marked by rich counterpoint, and a rich modal modulation (m. 164). Lower brass are added in m. 166, to make this the climactic section of the movement.

Calm reappears, marked by a beautiful trumpet solo in m. 179. There follows an imitative wind passage, based on music first heard in m. 24 ff. The strings return in m. 201, and a last momentary tonal darkening towards the flat side of the spectrum (m. 216) leads to a sustained chord on the dominant in the strings, while the bass clarinet recalls the opening idea. The bass falls to the tonic, E, for the final cadence.

The fourth movement is a lively Allegro Vigoroso which provides an affirmative close to this otherwise rather pessimistic work. It starts in C major.

The opening theme is insistent and optimistic:

ex. 9



This theme, along with various little arpeggio figures in sixteenth notes, is worked out brilliantly and at some length. A bright climax arrives at m. 39, with the theme in free imitation between trombone and trumpet over a pedal D, and marked by accents in the glockenspiel. The sixteenths gain momentum, and shortly lead to a more lyrical version of the opening theme (m. 50 ff), without the aggressive repeated notes at the start. At m. 66 the energetic character returns in the brass, now in F major, and then in the strings. The tonality shifts back to C major, and the repeated notes return in the bass (m. 94 ff). After a short, harmonically more dissonant passage (m. 104 ff), the diatonic flavor returns in a playful imitative pizzicato passage (m. 116 ff). This is brusquely interrupted by the brass, with the main theme, and more energetic contrapuntal development ensues. The pizzicati return (m. 170), only to be once more elbowed out by the insistent main theme (m. 187 ff), deftly soldered to a large recapitulation of the opening, which lasts until m. 234. Various other elements recur, including the lyrical version of the theme. The piccolo toys with the sixteenth note figures (m. 261 ff), and leads back to the string pizzicati, now accompanied by a solemn brass chorale (m. 268). As before, the character becomes very vigorous, passing through a short bitonal passage (m. 301-3) to a climax filled with stretto-like imitations (m. 307 ff). The counterpoint simplifies rhythmically in m. 318, providing the drive to a powerful final cadence in A, thereby showing up the E tonality of the first and third movements as a sort of huge dominant. The Second Symphony thus traverses the same evolving tonal path as the First Symphony.

Third Symphony

The Third Symphony dates from 1945. It is a substantial work, lasting almost thirty minutes. The première was given under the direction of Charles Munch. It is dedicated to the composer's parents.

The first movement begins in C natural minor, with the strong diatonic, modal flavor typical of Diamond's earlier music. Fragments of the long first theme (ex. 10) will recur in various guises elsewhere in the symphony:

ex. 10



Its insistent repeated notes, accompanied by seconds in the bassoons and clarinets build up tension, which is released in the ensuing long note and leaping figure. After an opening section working out this complex of motives, often in stretto imitation, there is a sudden harmonic brightening, moving from C minor to C major (m. 23). Development of the thematic material continues, in many varied guises. The music assumes a transitional character with various modulations, starting in m. 79, leading to a new idea, ex. 11, in D major (m. 127). This idea will also return in cyclic fashion:

ex. 11



Like the first idea, this one is treated in imitation, and in m. 157 gradually leads back, via the opening repeated note motive, to the character of the opening theme and the flat side of the harmonic spectrum (G natural minor). Continuous development is the rule in this movement now, often combining fragments of the two ideas (e.g. low strings, m. 195 ff). There is a 3/4 version of the end of ex. 10 starting at m. 207 in bassoons and cello, and shortly thereafter the main C minor tonality returns. Although there is no clear-cut recapitulation as such, the opening seems to be returning at m. 286; the long note in the theme now accompanies brilliant runs in winds and piano. The movement ends with a tutti climax (m. 321-end).

The second movement, Andante, is in D natural minor, and makes prominent use of the minor third from ex. 10, as well as echoing the ending of the first movement (compare m. 10 with m. 331 of the latter). However, its character is quiet and elegiac. The opening is scored for three flutes, harp and pianos; when the strings enter in m. 8, they are muted. A lovely interlude for violins and clarinet in canon, accompanied by harp (m. 18ff), leads to the only prominent sixteenth notes in the movement, which accompany a fuller string presentation of the main idea. After various dialogues and fragmentations, a harmonic surprise follows at m. 43: a shift to B minor. The main theme is now in the bass, and the counterpoint above is richer. A modulatory passage (m. 65 ff) leads back to D minor, and the mood of the opening. Now the music rises to

its first climax (m. 80 ff), and after a short respite, reaches a brighter, brass dominated peak in m. 91. The opening light texture returns in m. 98, and the movement trails off with echoes in timpani and flutes.

The third movement, *Allegro vivo*, is played *attacca* after the second, and is a very lively scherzo, based largely on a simple rhythm announced by the snare drum at the start. There are also two other motives of importance: a little upbeat figure in the piccolo, also introduced in the first bar, and a perky, syncopated motive first heard in m. 12 in piccolo and piano, which harks back to the all-important minor third of the symphony's main idea.

The initial section, in G major, develops these ideas with lightness and wit. Sustained lines are rare: there are really only two such phrases in this section, in the trumpet (m. 42 ff) and the trombone (m. 56 ff); they sound out like a Bach chorale cantus firmus over the whirlwind of brilliant orchestral activity. There are also a few subtle references to ex. 11 (e.g. m. 53, vlns, and clars.).

Given the very straightforward diatonic language, the sudden shift to A major (m. 68) is a big surprise, even though the thematic material stays the same. A moment of respite (m. 98-101) recalls the home G major, before entering a D major episode. These changes of key are not really felt as new sections, since the rhythmic momentum and thematic material remain largely unchanged. A major returns again (m. 131) with a few references to ex. 11 (m.135 and 156, in the strings). There follows another return to G major (m. 162) and the music breezes through a lively tutti climax of activity (m. 179). Finally an added note C major chord in m. 207 ushers in the coda in that key, where a three note timpani ostinato underlies final presentations of the syncopated motive in upper strings and winds. This subdominant ending is another tonal surprise.

The work finishes with a slow movement, *Adagio assai*; this is quite rare in Diamond's symphonic output.

A loud phrase in majestic half notes is declaimed by wind and brass, and continued softly by violas and harp (m. 4), giving out one of Diamond's favorite melodic profiles: a minor seventh, presented as a minor third followed by a perfect fifth. This profile will reappear many times in the main melodic lines of this movement.

This leads to a stately cantilena in divided strings (m. 8 ff), exemplifying the kind of subtle modal writing that Diamond must have admired in Ravel. The strings then become accompaniment to a lovely clarinet solo, which again makes reference to the melodic profile mentioned above. There follows quietly in m. 30 the first of several commentaries by full brass, acting here as background to an oboe line, again including the minor third plus perfect fifth contour. Strings rise into a continuation of this oboe phrase, now accompanied by other winds and harp (m. 38); the strings fill out in m. 43 ff.

A chorale-like interjection in the brass, with sighing appoggiaturas (m. 47 ff) leads in m. 51 to a return of the clarinet solo first heard in m. 21. At m. 60, the brass appoggiatura phrase of m. 47 returns, now in a semi-tutti. Finally, the modal string passage from m. 8 returns, now with the main line in the oboe. The work closes quietly, like an elegy, in D minor.

Fourth Symphony

Like the Third Symphony, the fourth also dates from 1945. It is dedicated to the memory of Natalie Koussevitzky. Despite its relatively short duration - about twenty minutes - the work has an expansive feel, and the orchestra is of almost Mahlerian proportions. (A reduced orchestration by the composer is also available.) The work is in three movements; unlike many of Diamond's other symphonies, this one is not cyclic.

The first movement, Allegretto, is a sonata inspired structure, built around two themes, ex. 12, and ex. 13. The first again features Diamond's favored interval profile (minor third plus perfect fifth).

ex. 12



This theme is in A natural minor, and is presented with a gently undulating eighth note accompaniment. This leads to an important repeated note motive (m. 14), and a broad melody in the strings. A transitional passage, alternating fragments of the repeated note motive and ex. 12, leads to the second theme.

ex. 13



In D minor, this idea arrives in the oboe and is accompanied by a walking ostinato that makes prominent use of the minor third plus perfect fifth combination mentioned above. This second theme is then set forth in richer orchestration (m. 39 ff), which leads shortly to an elaborate development, more contrapuntal in a nature, presenting the thematic material in continuously evolving fragmentations and combinations. One notes the canonic writing (m. 76), and the use of the repeated note motive as an accompaniment to a new section, starting in m. 84, which modulates to G minor. The arrival of the timpani in m. 104, and the brass' taking up the repeated note motive, lead to a large climax, culminating in m. 130. This climax links up to a tutti recapitulation of the

opening. This gradually dies down into the coda, which serves as a brief reminder of the second theme, at first as the sustained line finishes (m. 155 ff), and then more clearly, in m. 160 ff. The movement ends with a short Lydian phrase (on C), which has a brightening effect on the harmony.

The second movement starts *Adagio* in the Dorian mode on D, with an impressive presentation of the following motive in winds, harps, and piano:

ex. 14



A rich brass chorale follows, with the above motive appearing in the bass. This only develops briefly, and is followed at m. 11 by a long singing *Andante*, similar to other such passages in the first three symphonies. Again one notes the French flavor.

This long *Andante*, mostly in the darker regions of F and C minor, actually forms the core of the movement. After an anticipatory phrase in oboes and clarinets (m. 11 ff), the violas sing out the first strain of a new theme, followed by violins in m. 26. Clarinets now introduce a second strain (m. 35), accompanied by other winds. This again is followed by the violins; in fact, this melodic fragment (m. 41-2) will be the most thoroughly developed in the movement. It is spun out in many imitations and soon leads to a great broad climax in m. 59. After a short transitional *Piu Mosso*, still around the same material (except for a brief premonition of the return of ex. 14, in m. 71) a concluding section (m. 80 ff) briefly brings back the mood of the *Adagio*, now combined with melodic references in the strings to the *Andante* material.

The last movement is a rollicking *Allegro*, in C major, starting with the following main theme in the brass.

ex. 15



Strings then take up the latter part of this idea, and extend it (m. 7 ff), combined with a perky rhythmic motive in the tenor drum (m. 6-7). that will get gain in importance as the movement progresses. After a woodwind reply (m. 13), a consequent phrase (m. 21) leads to vigorous orchestral conversation around these motives.

A first chorale-like modulating interjection arrives in the brass in m. 31. The lively dialogue resumes, and a second chorale phrase ensues in woodwinds in m. 49. Again the energy returns, and now leads to a broader melody, which first appears in the violas (m. 65). This proves to be a transformation of ex. 15. The sixteenth notes disappear momentarily, and return in m. 76. A final strain of the chorale idea appears in strings and brass, and leads to a return of the main theme, now in the winds (m. 83).

In rondo-like fashion, another striking episode arrives in m. 100. The new version of the theme (first heard in m. 65) now appears in the harps, accompanied by the piano, timpani, and low strings, pizzicato. A new rhythm (quarter note triplets) arrives together with a modulation to G minor (m. 117). Elements from the first theme provide counterpoint. Yet again the broad version of the theme is heard in imitation in m. 141 ff; the sixteenths return (m. 147), and the snare drum announces a combination of the two versions of the main theme (m. 156 ff). Starting in m. 181, timpani repeat fragments from ex. 15, and the tenor drum motive starts building up momentum. A last presentation of the lyrical version of the main theme (m. 186) leads gradually to a climactic harmonic cluster (m. 210).

The movement ends with great élan: a final section built out of the tenor drum idea, punctuated by sharp brass chords, and under a soaring line in long notes in the high woodwinds and harmonics, rushes to a cadential peak, with a final accent on the tonic, A.

Fifth Symphony

The Fifth Symphony is dated 1951-1964. It was thus begun more or less concurrently with the Sixth Symphony, but finished after the Eighth Symphony. It is dedicated to Leonard Bernstein, who gave the first performance. The orchestra is of moderate size, but includes the organ, an instrument very rare in Diamond's work. The latter makes only one appearance, at the climax of the last movement. The Fifth Symphony is in two movements and lasts about twenty minutes.

Both the Fifth Symphony and the Sixth Symphony were started shortly after Diamond's arrival in Italy, at the beginning of what proved to be a stay of many years. Musically, as geographically, one immediately senses the composer exploring new terrain.

The most notable change is harmonic: Diamond's characteristic modal sound now acquires a much more intensely chromatic color.

Another change occurs in the way Diamond ends his symphonies: the optimistic and exuberant diatonic finales that appear in the first, second, and fourth symphonies, with

their rather American sound, now often give way to equally energetic but much more somber conclusions. Instead of rondo-like structures, there is a preponderance of fugues and passacaglias.

The Fifth Symphony begins with a beautiful slow introduction, based on a lyrical English Horn melody, once again based on Diamond's typical perfect fifth plus a minor third melodic contour.

ex. 16



This is followed by a chromatic pizzicato motive of pairs of walking seconds in the lower strings (m.6).

ex. 16 is restated and extended in the strings with rich harmony (m. 9 ff). It dies back down into the pizzicato motive, which links up with a striking, accelerating transition in pairs of timpani.

The pizzicato seconds inspire the syncopated main theme of the first movement:

ex. 17



This Allegro Energico is basically a sonata structure. As usual with Diamond, this idea (ex. 17) is worked out quite elaborately with numerous imitations, even within the exposition. (This is one reason why Diamond's developments and recapitulations can be confusing to the analyst: in effect, development is everywhere. The combination of such dense imitation with sonata-like dramatic oppositions, which create relief and emotional intensity, is a feature of Diamond's mature style.)

ex. 16 returns as counterpoint (m. 68), and shortly leads to a pause on B (m. 77), the "leading tone" of the second subject, which follows in the next bar.

ex.18



This second theme is presented in a vigorous fugato, and shortly leads to the third theme (m. 118):

ex. 19



Note the similar cadence to ex. 16. This is accompanied freely with bits of canonic imitation, and also with little staccato fragments of ex. 18.

Development proceeds with many dramatic juxtapositions. For example, ex. 18 suddenly returns in m. 171 after a lyrical section based on ex. 16. From time to time the music is interrupted by brutal reminders of the timpani transition into the Allegro, e.g. m. 199 and m. 221. At m. 260, ex. 17 breaks through the contrapuntal maelstrom with violent, dissonant chords, and is followed by another explosion in the timpani. A moment of troubled inactivity (m. 268-274) shortly leads to a reprise of ex. 18, which is now combined with ex. 19 (m. 281). After building to another climactic presentation of ex. 17 (m. 314 ff), at m. 322 the harsh timpani strokes return for one last time, alternating B and F, leading to the final cadence on E.

The second movement is really two in one: an Andante is followed by a quick fugue at m. 66. The Andante takes place primarily in the strings, starting forcefully in cellos and basses. The theme is an outgrowth of ex. 19. It develops in an intense, singing vein, introducing motivic material that will recur in the fugue (e.g. m. 11). After a lyrical climax (m. 38), the descent leads in m. 43 to a final reprise of a phrase already heard twice (in m. 14 ff, and m. 22 ff).

A transitional passage (m. 54-66) leads into the fugue, whose subject incorporates the opening contour of ex. 16, the start of ex. 19, the seconds of the first movement pizzicato motive, and the motive introduced in m. 11. It is this synthesis of most important elements in the symphony as a whole. This has the effect of permitting easy integration of bits of recapitulation from other movements, for example the lyrical interlude, based on ex. 19 that starts in m. 121. This technique will recur in the Sixth Symphony.

The fugue develops at some length, with the subject thoroughly worked out in fragmentation, inversion (m. 146 ff), augmentation (m. 152 ff), etc.. Even the odd little

high woodwind notes first heard in the transition (m. 63 ff) engender explosive attacks in the fugue (e.g. m. 106 ff). Finally marching quarter notes and flowing eighths stabilize the texture and create progressive intensification leading to the climactic entry of the organ (m. 178) in an intense stretto-like climax.

As the music calms, the mood of the introduction to the first movement returns. ex. 16 reappears in the bass in m. 193; the pizzicato motive reappears in m. 196. A cello solo based on ex. 19 emerges (m. 198), accompanied ever more lightly. The work ends poignantly with the cello dying away over echoes of the pizzicato idea.

Sixth Symphony

The Sixth Symphony is dated 1951-1954, and is dedicated to Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony. It has three movements, and the total duration is about 22 minutes. The work is scored for a medium sized orchestra including tubular bells, seen previously only in the First Symphony. The piano is again part of the orchestra, reflecting Diamond's preference for clear, incisive sounds.

Despite this, the beginning of the Sixth Symphony remains one of Diamond's most impressionistic moments, with its delicate divided string sustained chords, and flutter-tongue resonance in the flute.

Against this accompaniment, the following melodic fragment is presented by the oboe. It is a central thematic idea that will recur at key moments in the work, apart from its intense development in the first movement.

ex. 20



It has a slightly serial flavor, with its avoidance of repeated pitches. However, as always in Diamond's music, the harmony retains a richness that completely dissociates it from most of the European serialism of the same period.

Like the Fifth Symphony, the Sixth starts with a slow introduction, but with a unique twist: starting in m. 8, it alternates several times (at m. 14, m. 21, and m. 25) with short, quick sections before settling into an energetic *Allegro, fortemente mosso* in m. 32. This kind of juxtaposition of contrasting tempi recalls the late Beethoven quartets.

The slow phrases from m. 14 on are built on a melodic motive which prefigures an important theme, quoted below.

The main section of the movement starts with ex 21a in the bass, and shortly follows with ex. 21b, a more lyrical version of the same idea.

ex. 21a



ex. 21b



Shortly a dotted note rhythm appears (m. 44), tracing an intervallic contour - an augmented fourth followed by a perfect fourth - first heard in the introduction in m. 9. In similar fashion, a scalar motive first heard in m. 8 reappears in m. 47. The dotted note idea is subject to some development.

The contour of ex. 20 occurs canonically in m. 63, and leads to a climax in m. 66, where a rich dissonant chord overlays syncopated repeated accents.

A forceful motive appears in m. 68; it will frequently energize the counterpoint with its insistent repeated sixteenth notes:

ex. 22



ex. 21b sings out in the horns in m. 69 ff, leading to various imitations, combining all the elements heard up till now. After a climax in m. 115, quieter variants of ex. 21 emerge. After a brief resurgence of energy, the quiet returns in m. 129 ff, with woodwind solos based mostly on fragments of ex 21.

Before long the dotted note figure recurs, with its characteristic fourths (m. 143), and there is much tight imitation around ex. 21 once again. A powerful climax, with ex. 22 in the timpani (m. 154), overlaps with the first of several interjections by the bells, using a three note figure derived from ex. 20, inverted. The vigorous development resumes, with ex. 22 becoming more insistent, and eventually violently stopping the action in m. 185.

In m. 186, horns and strings resume with ex. 21a, in canonic imitation. This shortly leads to a striking passage with quiet sustained chords in high strings, punctuated by harsh fifths below; this gesture recalls m. 66.

There is something of a sense of recapitulation starting in m. 213. Again the texture fills out, only to be stopped for the second time by the bell motive (m. 234-5). More and more vigorous combinations of ex. 21a and ex. 22 lead to a final interruption by the bells (m. 262-3), and the movement ends emphatically, with ex. 22.

The second movement, slow and serious, is unusual in design: it is filled with odd pauses and interruptions, giving it a halting character. It begins with a broad line in the strings; within a few bars this line has evoked clear associations with ex. 20, 21, and 22. An answering phrase (m. 7 ff) is brought to a halt by a sudden grace note figure, tutti in m. 13.

The whole first section of this movement is strangely punctuated by occasional plaintive little oboe solos, the first of which occurs here (m. 14). It also includes pathetic grace notes. The orchestra picks up the same material (see m. 32), and is once again interrupted, this time by a startling glissando in the horns (m. 35). The subsequent phrase is also brusquely stopped by the grace note motive, tutti, in m. 41. This time, however, it leads to flowing counterpoint in the strings.

A *Maestoso* passage follows in m. 48, with dignified dotted note rhythms. It pauses uncertainly in m. 52; the oboe solo returns with its plaintive grace notes in m. 62, and there is yet another pause in m. 78.

Suddenly there is a *Presto* outburst, based on ex 22, which alternates with bits of *Adagio* writing, rather in the manner of the introduction to the first movement. When the *Adagio* returns for the last time (m. 104), a long clarinet solo emerges (m. 109 ff) vaguely echoing the oboe solos of the earlier slow section. The movement ends with a dense twelve note chord, widely spaced in the strings, while the winds imitate short motivic fragments, and the timpani sound a ghostly motive, based on ex. 22

The final movement, like that of the Fifth Symphony, consists of a short introductory phrase, based on ex. 22, which leads to a passacaglia built on an outgrowth of ex. 21b.

The plan of the passacaglia is as follows:

1. m. 5: theme (in the bass) under rich quarter note chords, tutti
2. m. 8: calmer string presentation of the theme, essentially monophonic
3. m. 12: strings with added flowing quarter note counterpoint
4. m. 16: adds winds and brass, and more active rhythmic counterpoint
5. m. 21: theme now sharply accented, with more complex rhythms above, including dotted notes foreshadowing the fugue theme, and quarter note triplets.
6. m. 29: theme in the violins
7. m. 34: theme back in the bass, chorale style, with dissonant harmony above.

This now leads to a powerful fugue (m. 40), whose main theme recalls the contour of ex. 20.

ex. 23



A full exposition of this theme begins, accompanied by other fragments from ex. 20. In m. 65, a new, running idea in parallel seconds is added, which will gain in importance. After another entry of the fugue subject (m. 71, vlins.) a new, singing variant is introduced in m. 76. This recurs in a moment of quiet starting in m. 95 in the violas, after a momentary climax. It returns yet again in high celli in m. 105, accompanied by smooth runs in the parallel seconds heard previously.

The vigorous character resumes in m. 110. The passacaglia theme unobtrusively returns in the bass in m. 125, and then, in a more forceful version, with intervals changed, in m. 138. After another passage combining the parallel seconds and the lyrical version of the subject (m. 146), a more scherzando mood prevails with the return of the original form of the subject in m. 152. The music regains vigor, leading to two canonic presentations of the passacaglia theme (m. 171 and m. 176); yet another ensues, in flowing quarter notes, in m. 180. In m. 192 the fugue subject returns, inverted, and is worked out further; an augmentation follows in the bass in m. 206.

The climactic passage is reached starting in m. 215, and the parallel seconds, now in the winds, bring a halt. The work ends with ex. 20 screaming in the trumpets and violins, while harsh, dissonant repeated chords in the rest of the orchestra, recalling the dotted note rhythm of the fugue subject, thunder out a final climax.

Seventh Symphony

Diamond's Seventh Symphony is dated 1959; the first performance took place under Eugene Ormandy, with the Philadelphia Orchestra, in 1962. It is dedicated to Ciro Cuomo. It is in three movements and last about sixteen minutes.

The work is based on a twelve tone row and uses some serial techniques in its development. However, as one would expect with Diamond, the harmony has strong tonal anchoring, and serial procedures are used as sources of melodic and contrapuntal inspiration, rather than as rigid rules.

The first measures of the symphony immediately present the row, divided into two hexachords:

ex.24



The opening *Andante* immediately begins to intensify, combining traditional motivic development techniques like fragmentation (m. 19) with serial procedures such as retrograde, and applying new rhythms to the pitch row (e.g. m. 16). An emphatic first climax (m. 19 ff) leads to a powerful pedal point on C#, over which a canon develops; the melodic line is a hybrid, derived from the first three notes of the second hexachord, and the last two notes of the first. The music continues its energetic drive up to a new section (m. 43) in 6/8, *Allegro, ma non tanto*.

This lively section makes use of another rhythmic variant of the first hexachord, but shortly becomes more sustained (m. 55). However the nervous character returns before long, and gradually the rhythms become more and more animated, with runs in sixteenth notes adding momentum and leading to a climax at m. 131. This shortly leads to a second buildup. Music first heard in m. 132 returns, more powerfully orchestrated. The succeeding passage (m. 24 ff) also returns, in m. 147, but without the canon; instead the insistent semitone from the first hexachord cries out above in the winds. As so often in Diamond's work, the culminating point is achieved by rhythmic simplification, in m. 151. A *Piu Mosso* follows (m. 152), having the effect of a lively coda. This climaxes in a dialogue between the high winds and the low strings calling to each other with the seconds that end the first hexachord and start the second, respectively. A final explosion in the timpani suddenly brings back the opening tempo in m. 170, and the movement ends, brooding over repeated two note phrases.

The second movement starts in almost the same tempo as the ending of the first, with a complete retrograde of the row, presented by a solo flute. Winds accompany with other fragments of the series. Clarinets enter in m. 5 with a free imitation of the flute line. In m. 10 the string choir emerges, with a line starting with the ubiquitous semitone G-Ab (end of the first hexachord) and moves off into a lyrical extension. Meanwhile a sixteenth note figure starts to emerge in m. 15 ff, first in the second violins, and then in the violas, getting more and more emphatic. This line reaches a declamatory climax in m. 26, and leads into the kind of intense, highly contrapuntal, lyrical writing that is familiar from Diamond's earliest works.

This quiets down into a trumpet line in m. 48, which is a thematic outgrowth of the opening flute melody, completed with imitations in the other two trumpets. The oboe picks up and spins out this line more gently, starting in m. 57.

In quick succession, a light scherzando character appears (m. 69), recalling the second violin counterpoint in m. 15, to be followed by sudden emphatic fragments in dialogue between winds (m. 74), brass (m. 75), and strings (m. 76). Now, with the opening flute line in the bass, the full brass enter fortissimo in m. 77, followed by strings and winds, and rise to a climactic section. At its peak, m. 89-91, the first hexachord appears in retrograde with strings and winds singing in unison. Echoes of the first movement's opening follow in m. 93 ff, and the movement ends, recalling the solo flute; now the bass comes to rest on a sustained G#.

The last movement, *Allegro Moderato*, starts with a mysterious pizzicato line in steady eighth notes played by the basses, based once more on the row, but transposed and starting from its third note. In m. 7 the violas enter, arco, with a sustained line, also based on the row. This is accompanied by nervous interjections in the winds, featuring slurred seconds derived from the first notes of each hexachord. This "sigh motive" will be important throughout the movement. Another scalar motive of four sixteenths (m. 13) develops in the viola line and becomes more prominent.

The pizzicato basses disappear in m. 24, and various motives are combined developmentally. At m. 28, the sixteenth note figure assumes a new guise as a sort of broken chord. The orchestra broadens into a passage in 6/4 time in m. 40, with very dissonant harmony. The two note motive based on the interval of the second is much in evidence. Using traditional motivic technique, Diamond expands the intervals of the scalar idea to make soaring arpeggios, which appear in sixteenths, and then augmented into eighths over more tense harmony. A canonic passage based on the sigh motive follows (m. 46), expanding towards a powerful cadence on A (m. 55). The rhythm changes to declamatory triplets at the climax of the succeeding phrase (m. 57), and there follows a sustained line in the lower brass, based on the first hexachord, answered by the strings (m. 61). This more rhythmically relaxed strain continues, reaching a peak in m. 81-2. There follows a powerful dialogue between strings in octaves and timpani, based straightforwardly on the two halves of the row (m. 82 ff). This shortly builds to fearfully dissonant twelve note chords, presented by the whole orchestra in m. 88 ff.

Suddenly there is a simplification to a unison F (m. 90), and there follows a retrograde of the row in pizzicato in vln. 1, shadowed by vln. 2, arco (m. 91 ff). This quiet section, filled with imitation of fragments of the row in simple rhythms continues, and brings back the opening pizzicato of the basses in m. 124. Gradually the intensity resumes, arriving at a pedal point on F# (m. 146), ornamented in the strings by imitation of the second E-F#. A new motive appears, characterized by repeated eighth notes (m. 151). Meanwhile fragments of the row continue to be treated developmentally, in quasi-fugal fashion.

A dramatic pause in m. 175 ushers in a powerful dialogue between strings and winds, based respectively on the two halves of the row. Trumpets begin a huge augmentation of the whole row starting in m. 182, combined with the propulsive repeated eighth note idea. The two planes ultimately coalesce on the note A, which falls to the D, completing the row. There follows a huge unison crescendo on the D (m. 204 ff), reminiscent of the

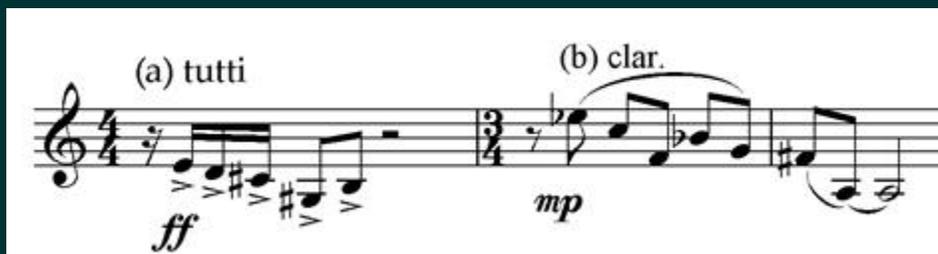
famous gesture in Berg's *Wozzeck*. A climactic dissonant second in m. 210 sets off the coda, and the movement ends as it began, with pizzicato basses walking steadily in eighths. In a sort of gestural retrograde of the opening the surrounding lines gradually dissolve, leaving only the basses, repeating the two seconds that begin each half of the row. The similarity to the end of the first movement - restless repetitions dying away with no real resolution - is telling.

Eighth Symphony

Dated 1960, the Eighth Symphony is dedicated to Aaron Copland, and was premiered by the New York Philharmonic. The work lasts about twenty-eight minutes. Like the Fifth Symphony, it is in two movements, but the second movement is a composite, here a set of variations plus a fugue.

Like the Seventh Symphony, the eighth uses a tone row as a source of material, but once again there are strong tonal influences, and classical motivic techniques are combined very flexibly with serial manipulations. The series is presented immediately at the start; it contains two unequal halves, "a", and "b", that are strongly contrasting, foreshadowing the many sudden juxtapositions in the movement.

ex. 25



The image shows a musical staff with two parts. Part (a) is labeled '(a) tutti' and is in 4/4 time. It features a series of notes with accents and a dynamic marking of *ff*. Part (b) is labeled '(b) clar.' and is in 3/4 time. It features a series of notes with a dynamic marking of *mp*.

After this "motto" beginning, a slow introduction starts in m. 4 with a beautiful horn line presenting first "b", and then "a", now calm in character. After a few string comments, based on "b", the bass arrives at a brooding cadence in Bb. The Bb is held over into the start of the main body of the movement, *Allegro Vivo*, while the horn version of the row is given a new fragmented and nervous character, starting in m. 26. The presentation is very striking, with several abrupt stops.

A short, gradually slowing transition, pizzicato (m. 43 *ff*), leads to the second theme in the clarinet, which grows out of ex. 26 (derived from notes 2-5 of the row); the pizzicati continue in the accompaniment.

ex. 26



Strings soon carry this farther, arco, with much reference to ex. 25b (m. 63 ff). A climax is reached with the reappearance of the brass in m. 85-6, again calling out ex 25b. ex. 25a follows (m. 87 ff) in sequence, and the music again calms somewhat.

Soon (m. 104) the dramatic beginning of the Allegro returns, but now without the pauses, and somewhat extended. A sudden slowing into octaves (m. 123) leads to a quiet section (m. 124 ff). Basses and bass clarinet proceed in imitation; gradually the other strings are added. The flowing movement is once again broken by the energetic, quick character (m. 154 ff), but only briefly.

Winds dominate in m. 168 ff, presenting the second theme in canon by diminution. This smooth passage continues, first in quarter notes, then in eighth notes, and gradually rises to a more intense tutti (m. 192 ff), which brings back yet again the Allegro vivo, in m. 199. This is now sustained for some time, with occasional outbursts of sixteenth notes (e.g. m. 247, derived from ex. 26). At m. 266, the pedal Bb which began the Allegro returns, and the music gradually relaxes into a calm section for winds (m. 287) and then for strings (m. 295); this recalls the character of m. 168 ff, although the melodic contours differ.

Canonic writing is again in evidence in m. 305 ff, and quickly leads to a resurgence of the Allegro in m. 309. The second theme soars out in four horns in m. 341 ff, and after two bars (m. 353-5) of declamatory homophonic writing based on ex 25b, there follows the densest tutti of the whole movement (m. 356 ff), combining many motivic elements. The coda starts in quicker tempo in m. 379. M. 415 ff recalls m. 245 ff, complete with the rushing sixteenths, which now provide extra momentum. The movement ends forcefully, linking the motive of ex. 26 with ex. 25b.

The second movement starts with a set of variations. Dark string chords underlie a singing melody in the violins. Although not a direct statement of the row, elements in the contour recall ex. 25. The melody migrates to the bass in m. 9, while successive phrases return it to the violins (m. 16, m. 20, etc.). Here is the formal plan.

1. Variation I presents a line first heard as counterpoint to the bass phrase (in m. 9 ff), now in canon with the celli, and accompanied by the winds. The harmony becomes more intense (m. 58) and then the winds are left alone in m. 59.
2. Variation II is dominated by mercurial, soloistic lines in quick notes, first in violas, then flute, bassoon, and finally piccolo clarinet. It is quick and light.
3. Variation III is more dense and rises to two climaxes (m. 80 and 87), both making prominent use of ex 25b.

4. Variation IV is an ornate dialog between winds and strings, starting in octaves. When the brass enter (m. 98), the harmony becomes more dense; the intensity builds until the start of the next variation.
5. Variation V has a scherzando character, including bright little runs in the piccolo.
6. Variation VI is the most contrasting. It is a lovely intimate moment, with hushed, divided strings punctuated by rich, mysterious chords in the harp.
7. Var. VII starts with the "motto" theme of ex. 25a, but quickly subsides into large slabs of recapitulation of material from the theme: m. 168 ff corresponds to m. 10 ff and so on. The orchestration is varied, however, now leading to an emphatic tutti, Adagio, in m. 188. This tutti culminates in m. 198 in a statement based on ex 25a, and leads directly into the fugue.

The main subject of the fugue is presented first in the trumpets (m. 199 ff), and is derived largely from ex. 25b, but using the (augmented) rhythm of ex. 25a. A vigorous exposition reaches a first climax in m. 225. There follows a long line in the violins, based on ex. 26, and accompanied by fragments of the main fugue subject. As with Diamond's other orchestral fugues, the material is explored in great contrapuntal depth, but with many dramatic contrasting moments, appropriate to a symphonic style. Since the tempo is constant however, there is a sense of stability that helps make the fugue a convincing conclusion to this very dynamic work.

Starting in m. 287 brass present a huge augmentation of the main theme, followed by strings in m. 296. Starting in m. 305, ex. 26 is announced by horns and timpani, oscillating between A and C (a "monogram" for Aaron Copland; as Neil Stannard's notes to the recording⁴ point out, this conceit is present in the first movement as well).

Finally a faster codetta arrives in m. 333 ff, with tight stretto imitation, based on ex. 25a, and recalling the running sixteenths from m. 417 of the first movement. The stretto motive ends the symphony with great energy.

The late symphonies

Although I had no access to scores or recordings of symphonies nine, ten, or eleven, the following information is available.⁵

The Ninth Symphony is dedicated to the memory of Dimitri Mitropoulos. It is in two large movements, and contains a large baritone solo, on texts Diamond read with Mitropoulos, including poetry by Michelangelo.

The Tenth Symphony is still unfinished at this writing (1995), and is not due to be premièred for several years.

The Eleventh Symphony, almost fifty minutes in length, is in four movements. The first is one of Diamond's typical sonata allegros; the second is a rich, Mahlerian Adagio, the third is a humorous scherzo, and the last is a rondo-like structure.

Conclusion

Diamond was the last major symphonist from a generation where the genre was still considered as normal. New symphonic works in the mainstream tradition have become very difficult to get performed. A good deal of responsibility for this must be laid at the doors of conductors more interested in pursuing their own careers than in cultivating the musical soil around them, so as to have fresh and interesting repertoire to perform. It is probably no coincidence that so many of Diamond's early champions were conductors trained in Europe, for whom a symbiosis with composers was taken for granted.

For this reason, it is all the more impressive that Diamond - both through his works and his teaching - and now Gerard Schwarz continue to bring these important works before the public. If the symphonic tradition is to endure, perhaps their example will encourage others to follow suit. It has often been pointed out that David Diamond's work grows out of a rich tradition; one also hopes that it will help nourish a musical future for the symphony as a genre.

1. Victoria Kimberling, *David Diamond, a Bio-Bibliography*, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, N.J., & London, 1987. All further references are to this work, *passim*.

2. Diamond made several orchestral arrangements of French works from this period, including the Fugue from Ravel's *Tombeau de Couperin*.

3. In the recording of the work by Gerard Schwarz, m. 42-53 are cut. According to Maestro Schwarz (in a telephone interview on May 26, 1995) this cut was suggested to Diamond by Dimitri Mitropoulos and approved by the composer. The published edition, however, retains the missing music.

4. *David Diamond, Vol. IV (Symphony No. 8, Suite from TOM, and This Sacred Ground)*, played by the Seattle Symphony, conducted by Gerard Schwarz. Delos Records, #DE 3141.

5. The information about *Symphony #9* is gleaned from the Kimberling book, p. 49-52. Information about symphonies #10 and #11 came to me from the telephone interview with Maestro Schwarz referred to previously.

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*email: alanbelkinmusic_gmail.com (replace _at_ with @). I am always glad to hear comments or suggestions concerning the content here. I do get a great deal of email from this website, so I may not reply to you immediately. Since so many have asked, I do offer private lessons, either in person or via the Internet; please inquire for my rates. Please do **not** send me your music without an invitation; I unfortunately do not have time to respond to everyone who just wants my opinion of their score.*