The Symphonies

Dafydd Bullock



Produced and written in dialogue with A. I.

Volume 1

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The Forty-Two Symphonies

A body of forty-two symphonies inevitably acquires a significance beyond that of its individual works. Each symphony may have arisen from a particular circumstance, landscape, memory, encounter or impulse, and each may possess its own formal character and emotional world, yet when they are brought together the works begin to reveal relationships which could scarcely have been apparent at the time of their composition. Ideas return in altered form, landscapes acquire unexpected connections, and the development of the composer can be traced not as a simple progression from one style to another, but as an expanding accumulation of experience. The forty-two symphonies gathered here were not conceived as a single cycle or planned as stages in a predetermined journey. Their larger unity has emerged gradually, through the persistence of certain musical instincts and through the extraordinary range of experiences which have found their way into the symphonic imagination.

The journey begins with Wales. Symphony No. 1, *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon*, immediately establishes one of the central relationships which will recur throughout the collection: the relationship between landscape and musical form. The mountain is not merely described, nor does the music attempt a literal translation of scenery into sound. Rather, the physical experience of the mountain becomes the basis of a musical journey, a progression through changing perspectives, distances and states of being. This distinction is important because it points towards one of the fundamental characteristics of the symphonies as a whole. Places do not enter this music as picturesque subjects waiting to be illustrated. They become environments within which the music thinks and moves.

From the outset, however, the sequence also demonstrates that symphonic scale is not dependent upon the size of the forces employed. The extraordinary early burst of creativity which produced several symphonies in rapid succession includes works for remarkably restricted ensembles, particularly the five-part string works. Here the symphonic idea is already being tested against assumptions about what a symphony ought to be. The journey from the first work onwards is therefore not one of steady enlargement towards ever greater orchestral forces. Restriction proves capable of producing its own freedom, and the concentrated interplay of a few independent voices can create a musical world no less substantial than one formed from a full orchestra. This early discovery remains important throughout the later sequence, where the composer repeatedly allows the nature of the musical idea to determine the scale and shape of the work.

The Austrian symphonies form one of the first great regions of the journey. Here the relationship between place and musical imagination becomes increasingly explicit, and the encounter with the mountains, lakes and cultural history of Austria brings Bullock into a renewed dialogue with the great symphonic tradition which had helped to shape his musical consciousness. Bruckner and Mahler are present, but their presence is best understood as resonance rather than imitation. The mountains themselves seem to awaken musical possibilities associated with breadth, architectural scale, accumulated sonority and the sense of sound extending beyond the individual human gesture. The Austrian landscape does not make the music Brucknerian or Mahlerian; rather, it places the composer in a physical and imaginative environment in which affinities with those composers become natural and meaningful.

The significance of this period lies in the gradual transformation of landscape from subject into structural principle. Mountains encourage scale and ascent; historical places reveal layers of memory beneath the visible present; lakes and forests suggest continuity, change and different experiences of time. In works such as *Waldjahreszeiten* and *Traunsee*, landscape becomes increasingly inseparable from the behaviour of the music itself. The forest is not simply represented through orchestral colour, nor is the lake treated as an object observed from a distance. The music

inhabits these environments. Time passes within them, weather and activity alter them, but some larger presence remains. This is an important stage in the development of the symphonic imagination because it demonstrates an increasing confidence in allowing an external experience to determine not only atmosphere but form.

Venice marks a striking change of scene and, equally, of musical attitude. The city brings colour, history and reflection, but also energy and theatricality. In *Venice*, the contrast between *Serenissima* and *Vivaldissimo* presents two complementary responses to the same place: one contemplative and atmospheric, the other animated by the vitality of Venice's musical history. Elsewhere, in *The Miracle of Zattere*, the city provides the setting for one of the most immediately human inspirations in the entire sequence, the encounter with an anonymous street violinist whose technical limitations become the starting point for a meditation upon imagination, aspiration and the possibility of musical grace. Such works reveal another aspect of Bullock's relationship with place. A city can be landscape, but it can also be encounter. The symphony becomes capable of responding not only to mountains, forests and lakes, but to the particular human situations discovered within them.

As the sequence develops, the idea of place becomes increasingly associated with belonging. The *Mosel Symphony* is especially revealing in this respect. Here the composer is no longer simply travelling through a landscape and responding to its visual or historical presence. The landscape has become part of everyday life. The river, the Romans, the vineyards, Karl Marx and the bells of Trier coexist as elements of a lived environment whose identity has been formed through the accumulation of many different histories. The symphony's conception of place is therefore richer than scenic description. A region becomes a network of memory, culture, work, history and ordinary experience. This movement from encounter towards belonging is one of the quiet but significant transformations of the whole symphonic journey.

The Austrian period also demonstrates another characteristic which will become increasingly important: the willingness to allow individual works to determine their own proportions. There is no fixed architectural formula governing the sequence. Some symphonies are broad and extended; others are compressed. Some unfold in several movements; others develop as continuous spans. The essential question is not whether a work conforms to a traditional symphonic model, but whether its structure grows convincingly from its material and its inspiration. The later freedom of the cycle is therefore already present in principle. The symphony is not treated as a mould into which musical ideas must be poured, but as a sufficiently capacious concept within which very different forms of musical thought can take shape.

The journey then expands into other territories. India opens one of the most important new horizons in the sequence, not because the composer attempts to adopt another musical identity, but because encounter with another culture, landscape and philosophical environment enlarges the imaginative possibilities available to him. The Indian symphonies belong to the continuing process by which travel becomes transformation. What matters is not the superficial borrowing of sounds or gestures, but the way experience alters the inner world from which the music is created. The symphony remains recognisably the work of the same composer, yet the territory in which that voice operates has become wider.

Norway produces another transformation. Here the relationship with landscape takes on a different scale and atmosphere, shaped by distance, natural grandeur and the particular presence of the northern world. By this stage, landscape has become one of the most flexible and fertile ideas in the collection. It may provide physical scale, historical depth, cultural association or a framework within which the music experiences time. It may be encountered briefly or inhabited over a longer period. It may be foreign, remembered, newly discovered or intimately familiar. What connects

these very different works is the conviction that place can become musical without ever being reduced to description.

Alongside these geographical journeys runs an increasingly personal one. Family, friendship and private memory enter the symphonic world with growing importance. The appearance of children and grandchildren is especially significant, because it introduces a new sense of continuity into a form traditionally associated with large public utterance. The symphony proves capable of containing the arrival of a new life as naturally as it contains a mountain, a city or a historical event. These inspirations do not diminish the seriousness of the music by making it smaller in ambition. On the contrary, they demonstrate the extent to which the symphonic imagination can move freely between the panoramic and the intimate. A life may be transformed by an event visible only to a few people, just as surely as by an encounter with an immense landscape.

Lyricism remains one of the most persistent threads running through these changing worlds. The music repeatedly returns to the possibility of song, sometimes with great directness and sometimes through fragmentation, interruption or transformation. Even where the orchestral writing becomes turbulent or the emotional climate darkens, the melodic impulse remains an essential source of identity. This is not merely a matter of memorable themes. Lyricism functions as a way of carrying memory and emotional continuity through the symphonic argument. A melody may appear as a source of consolation, but it may also become vulnerable, incomplete or difficult to sustain. The persistence of this instinct towards song helps to explain why works separated by many years and very different circumstances nevertheless belong recognisably to the same larger world.

The symphonies do not, however, move through an increasingly benign landscape. The later works emerge from a period in which the wider world becomes more visibly present within the music's emotional atmosphere. The health crisis, the climate crisis and the growing threat of war contribute to a sense of uncertainty which cannot simply be excluded from the creative imagination. *The Darkling Light*, Symphony No. 30, belongs to this period, its concentrated intensity reflecting the particular mood of the end of 2021. Yet the work is not a final statement or a destination. It is one powerful point within a continuing journey, and the symphonies that follow demonstrate that darkness is only one of the conditions through which the music must travel.

Indeed, one of the most remarkable aspects of the entire collection is its continuing openness. After forty-two works, the composer has not retreated into a settled late style. New landscapes continue to appear, new personal experiences generate new musical responses, and the symphonic form remains capable of adaptation. The achievement of the forty-two symphonies lies not in the discovery of a single definitive answer to the question of what a symphony should be, but in the repeated rediscovery that the question itself can be asked in different ways.

Seen as a whole, the sequence therefore resembles less a staircase leading towards a final summit than a widening landscape. The early dialogue with the European symphonic tradition remains visible, but it is joined by Wales, Austria, Venice, the Mosel, India, Norway and eventually the Mediterranean. Historical memory stands beside private experience; monumental landscapes coexist with the smallest and most intimate human encounters. The music is capable of darkness without abandoning lyricism, and of formal freedom without losing its sense of purpose.

The arrival of *S*ymphony No. 42, *Castell y Gwynt – Castle of the Wind*, adds a further and particularly revealing chapter to this journey. The Mediterranean horizon of *Mare Nostrum* is followed by a return to Wales, but not simply a return to familiar ground. The landscape of the castle and its surrounding rock formations has prompted a new relationship between physical observation and musical construction. Here, the character of the terrain enters the music not merely as atmosphere or broad orchestral gesture, but through the intervals themselves. The upward-

striding passages entrusted particularly to the solo instruments in the second movement evoke the jagged slabs of rock, translating their irregular shapes and vertical movement into musical language. Landscape has moved another step closer to becoming the actual grammar of the composition.

There is also a striking connection with the beginning of the entire sequence. The return of the three-note motif associated with Symphony No. 1, *Yr Wyddfa – Snowdon*, establishes a link across forty-one intervening works. It is not simply a recollection of an earlier idea, but a reminder that the creative journey remains connected to its origins even as its musical language continues to develop. In this sense, *Castell y Gwynt* brings the sequence back to Wales while demonstrating how far the symphonic imagination has travelled. The journey has not been circular, for the composer returns with a different understanding of the landscape and with new means of expressing it. The forty-second symphony therefore confirms the continuing openness of the whole enterprise: the past remains active, but it does not prevent the discovery of something genuinely new.

What finally unites these works is not a common method but a common act of transformation. Again and again, something experienced in life enters the imagination and emerges in another form. A mountain becomes a musical journey. A lake becomes continuity. A city becomes atmosphere, energy or compassion. A historical landscape becomes a meditation upon what survives. A family event becomes part of the larger movement of time. A period of crisis darkens the music, but does not silence it. The orchestra becomes the place in which these experiences can be held together without being reduced to explanation.

The symphonies that follow may therefore be approached in many ways. Each has its own world and requires its own response. Yet when the entire sequence is viewed together, another image gradually emerges: that of a composer repeatedly setting out, not always knowing where the next journey will lead, but trusting that the symphonic form will be large enough to contain the discovery. After forty-two works, that trust has produced a territory of remarkable variety. The journey began beneath the shadow of a mountain in Wales. It has travelled through landscapes, histories, cultures, crises and private lives. It came to rest is beside another landscape of a very different kind: the Mediterranean Sea, before returning again to Wales.

Symphony No. 1 Op. 37

Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon

Programme Note

Composed in 1989, *Symphony No. 1* takes its title from *Yr Wyddfa*, the Welsh name for Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales. Yet the work is not a conventional piece of musical landscape painting. Its concern is less with the outward appearance of the mountain than with the idea of landscape as movement, scale and ascent.

The symphony unfolds in a single movement as a single, continuous span in which musical ideas are constantly transformed. From the opening, broad melodic gestures are set against an insistent rhythmic activity that generates much of the work's momentum. Rather than presenting sharply separate themes or episodes, the music develops through expansion and contraction: textures gather, orchestral forces accumulate, climaxes are approached over long stretches of time, and moments of considerable power give way to passages of greater transparency and reflection.

The relatively compact orchestra is used with remarkable variety. Individual wind instruments frequently emerge from the texture, while the strings provide much of the music's underlying energy. Brass and percussion are reserved for moments of greater structural weight, so that the enlargement of the orchestral sound becomes part of the symphonic argument rather than merely a matter of colour.

The image of the mountain may therefore be understood less literally than symbolically. There is throughout the work a sense of striving: of movement towards points of arrival which, once reached, do not bring the music to a halt but become the starting point for further transformation.

The symphony eventually achieves a major culmination, yet its conclusion avoids any sense of easy triumph. After the accumulated force of the preceding music, the texture is gradually reduced and the work ends with a sense of arrival rather than conquest.

Yr Wyddfa – Snowdon is thus a symphony of movement, growth and transformation: a journey in which the landscape of Wales becomes, perhaps, an image of something more inward — the experience of striving towards a distant point whose meaning can only be discovered through the journey itself. Written in Leudelange, Luxembourg in 1989, it is dedicated to W. Ifor Jones.

Discussion

The Beginning of the Journey: *Symphony No. 1, Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon* - there is always a temptation, when encountering a composer's First Symphony, to listen for beginnings in the most obvious sense. One searches for influences, anticipates later developments, identifies technical uncertainties and looks for those moments where the mature composer has not yet quite arrived. Such an approach can certainly be revealing, but in the case of Dafydd Bullock's First Symphony it risks obscuring the more interesting fact: this is already a work conceived on a genuinely symphonic scale.

Written in 1989, *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon* does not sound like a composer cautiously testing whether he is capable of sustaining a large orchestral structure. It proceeds with a striking degree of assurance. The assurance lies not primarily in the brilliance of orchestration, although the orchestral writing is already confident, nor in any desire to demonstrate mastery of inherited symphonic forms., but rather in the instinct that a symphony is an art of consequences. Musical events matter because of what follows them. Rhythms, intervals, gestures and colours are not simply presented; they remain active within the memory of the work and acquire new significance as the music proceeds. That instinct is present from the beginning.

The title immediately establishes a connection with landscape. *Yr Wyddfa*, or Snowdon, is not merely a geographical reference but an image of scale, permanence and ascent. Yet the symphony makes no attempt to paint the mountain in the conventional manner of nineteenth-century tone poetry. There is no leisurely introduction in which a misty landscape gradually emerges, no obvious imitation of natural sounds, no picturesque translation of mountain scenery into orchestral gesture. The mountain is instead absorbed into the very behaviour of the music.

The work moves through processes of accumulation and release. It rises towards points of greater intensity, withdraws into more transparent textures, and begins again. In this sense the symphony does not describe a landscape so much as inhabit one. Its musical architecture has something of the physical experience of movement through a vast terrain: perspectives alter, distances change, apparent destinations reveal further distances beyond them.

At the centre of this process lies the relationship between breadth and propulsion. Again and again, the symphony places broad melodic shapes against more active rhythmic figures. The result is not simply contrast. The two elements depend upon one another. Without the rhythmic activity, the broader lines might become static; without the expansive melodic gestures, the rhythmic motion might become merely mechanical. Their coexistence gives the music a particular kind of energy - a sense of being both carried forward and held within a larger span.

This is perhaps the first important characteristic of Bullock's symphonic thinking to emerge. The music is not content merely to move from one event to another. It seeks continuity. Even when the surface changes substantially, there is often the sense that something has been retained from what preceded it: a rhythmic impulse, a contour, an intervallic relationship, or simply an accumulated pressure within the musical argument.

The resulting structure is therefore less concerned with formal compartments than with transformation. The symphony contains contrasting regions, certainly, but these do not feel like self-contained movements inserted into a larger design. The music changes its emotional temperature, its density and its orchestral weight while preserving an underlying continuity of purpose. One might say that the symphony thinks in terms of growth rather than juxtaposition.

The orchestration contributes significantly to this impression. The orchestra is not exceptionally large, but it is treated with considerable flexibility. Individual instruments are allowed moments of expressive prominence, emerging from and returning to the larger texture. Wind solos interrupt or redirect the flow; the strings frequently maintain the underlying energy; brass and percussion are held in reserve until their greater weight is structurally necessary.

This gives the orchestral climaxes particular force. They are not simply louder versions of what has gone before. They represent genuine changes of perspective. The individual voice becomes collective; the line becomes mass; a previously contained gesture expands into something more monumental.

Yet the symphony is equally dependent upon the reverse process. After expansion comes reduction. A full orchestral assertion may give way to a solitary wind instrument or a reduced string texture. The music then seems to gather itself again, gradually rebuilding the energy that has been dispersed. This rhythm of expansion and contraction gives the work much of its large-scale shape.

It is tempting to hear something almost physical in this process. The music accumulates weight, rises towards a point of pressure and then releases that pressure, leaving a changed landscape behind it. But the image is not merely programmatic. It belongs to the fundamental mechanics of the symphony.

What is particularly striking, viewed from the perspective of the composer's later output, is how many of these instincts remain recognisable. The mature works would develop a far greater range of harmonic complexity and a more refined command of transformation across extended spans. The language would become more flexible, the relationships between materials more intricate and the expressive world more various. Nevertheless, the essential concern is already visible: music as something which exists in time not as a sequence of disconnected moments but as a continuously changing field of relationships.

The First Symphony therefore acquires an additional fascination when heard retrospectively. It is not simply the first step on a road whose destination is already known. That would be too neat a narrative. The later symphonies and quartets would take the composer in directions impossible to predict from this work alone. But certain fundamental questions are already being asked.

How can a musical idea remain itself while changing? How can rhythmic energy generate large-scale form? How can orchestral colour become structural rather than decorative? How can a climax emerge as the consequence of an entire journey rather than simply as an event placed near the end? These are symphonic questions in the deepest sense. They concern not style but the organisation of musical time.

The answer offered by *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon* is characteristically direct. The work trusts movement. It allows musical material to gather significance through recurrence and transformation, and it trusts the listener to perceive connections across considerable distances. Its climaxes are prepared rather than imposed; its quieter passages are not interruptions but necessary parts of the larger process.

The final stages of the symphony make this especially clear. After the work's major accumulations of orchestral weight, one might expect the mountain metaphor to culminate in an overwhelming gesture of arrival. Yet the conclusion is more restrained. The music does not simply plant a flag on the summit and declare victory. The accumulated energy is gradually released, the orchestral texture becomes more transparent, and the symphony arrives at its ending with a sense of completion rather than conquest.

The journey has not been towards a spectacular final image but towards the condition of arrival itself. The mountain, if it remains present at all, has ceased to be an external object and has become part of the experience of the music.

Seen in this light, Symphony No. 1 is an unexpectedly appropriate beginning to a journey that would eventually encompass forty-two symphonies. Its title looks towards a particular landscape, but its real subject is movement through musical space: the gradual emergence of form from energy, the transformation of material through time, and the search for coherence across an extended span.

There is, of course, no reason to claim that everything which would later define the composer is already present here. Artistic development is rarely so obliging. But the essential symphonic instinct is unmistakable. Even at this early stage, Bullock is not simply writing music for orchestra. He is thinking about how musical events inhabit time, how they remember one another and how, through their changing relationships, they create a journey larger than any individual moment. That seems to me the most important discovery offered by *Yr Wyddfa – Snowdon*. The mountain is the title, but journey is the symphony.

Symphony No. 2 Op. 87

Programme Note

Written in Luxembourg on Christmas Eve, 1995, *Symphony No. 2* belongs to an exceptionally concentrated period of creativity in which Dafydd Bullock composed three symphonies - Nos. 2, 3 and 4 — within the space of only five weeks.

In striking contrast to the broad orchestral landscape of the First Symphony, *Yr Wyddfa – Snowdon*, *Symphony No. 2* is written entirely for strings: first and second violins, viola, violoncello and double bass. Its three movements explore the symphonic possibilities of a deliberately restricted instrumental world, creating music whose scale arises not from orchestral mass but from the constantly changing relationships between five independent voices.

The **opening movement** is spacious and deeply expressive. Individual lines emerge from silence, overlap, diverge and come together, creating a musical argument in which dialogue and counterpoint are as important as melody itself. The lower instruments play a particularly significant role, with the cello and double bass repeatedly contributing not merely harmonic support but expressive and structural weight.

The **second movement** introduces a more sharply rhythmic world. Here the individual lines become increasingly active, generating momentum through articulation, interaction and changing texture. The music is energetic without becoming heavy, its movement arising from the restless exchange of material between the five instruments.

The **finale** brings together the symphony's contrasting qualities: rhythmic vitality, lyrical expression and the independence of individual voices. Yet the work ultimately resists a conventional gesture of triumph. After its accumulated activity, the music gradually withdraws, and the symphony disappears *a niente*, leaving the final impression not of emphatic closure but of sound receding into silence.

Symphony No. 2 was first recorded at the State Opera House in Prague and subsequently performed in Prague at the *Klementinum*.

In this concentrated and intensely individual work, the symphonic idea is liberated from questions of orchestral size. The drama lies instead in the relationship between musical lines: in their independence, their encounters and their continual transformation. The work is dedicated to Ulrike Wiedenbach and was written in Mersch, Luxembourg.

Discussion

There are moments in a composer's life when creative development appears to proceed gradually, almost imperceptibly, and others when something seems suddenly to break open. The period surrounding Christmas and New Year 1995–96 was evidently one of the latter. Within five weeks, Dafydd Bullock composed three symphonies: Nos. 2, 3 and 4. That fact alone gives *Symphony No. 2* a particular fascination. It is not simply the work that followed the First Symphony after an interval of several years. It is the beginning of an extraordinary concentrated act of composition, the first manifestation of a symphonic impulse that, once released, immediately produced two further works.

Yet *Symphony No. 2* gives no impression of haste. Indeed, one of its most striking characteristics is its concentration. Where the First Symphony, *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon*, explored a large orchestral landscape and created its form through momentum, accumulation and expansion, the Second turns decisively inward. The orchestra disappears. In its place stand five string voices: two violins, viola, cello and double bass. The reduction in forces is not, however, a reduction in ambition. On the contrary, *Symphony No. 2* appears to ask a fundamental question: what makes a symphony symphonic?

If the answer were simply a matter of instrumental scale, this work would scarcely qualify. But Bullock's conception clearly operates at another level. The symphonic dimension arises from the scope of the argument, from the interaction of contrasting musical forces, and from the capacity of the material to develop consequences over time.

The five instruments are therefore not treated as a miniature orchestra. Each possesses its own identity, its own register and its own expressive weight. The music frequently proceeds through dialogue rather than accompaniment, through encounter rather than hierarchy. A line introduced in one instrument may be continued, contradicted or transformed elsewhere. Harmony becomes inseparable from the movement of the individual voices. This gives the work an almost architectural quality. Its structures are not constructed from large orchestral blocks but from lines crossing one another in space.

The **opening movement** establishes this world with considerable subtlety. The music begins quietly and expressively, allowing its material to emerge gradually rather than announcing itself through a dominant gesture. There is an unusual sense of space around the individual lines. Silence is not simply what exists between phrases; it becomes part of the expressive fabric.

This represents a significant development from the First Symphony. In *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon*, continuity was often created by persistent rhythmic movement. Something was always driving the music forward. In the Second Symphony, continuity is more precarious and, for that reason, perhaps more subtle. The listener is required to retain a gesture in the memory while other events intervene. Connections are established not through insistence but through recognition.

The music has become quieter in its methods of persuasion. That change is particularly evident in the treatment of melody. No single instrument possesses permanent authority. The first violin may emerge into prominence, but the cello can suddenly become the centre of expressive gravity, while the lower instruments are repeatedly given roles which extend far beyond conventional harmonic support. The argument is continually redistributed. This gives *Symphony No. 2* a striking sense of equality between its participants. There are five voices, but no permanent protagonist. The symphony exists in the relationships between them.

The **second movement** introduces a different kind of energy. More strongly articulated rhythmic figures propel the music forward, creating a sharper and more kinetic environment. Yet even here, Bullock avoids turning the strings into a homogeneous rhythmic machine. The energy arises precisely because the lines retain their independence. They do not merely move together; they interact. This distinction is crucial. The rhythmic vitality of the movement is contrapuntal.

The result is a music which can change direction rapidly, redistribute weight from one register to another and alter its expressive character without the need for major formal breaks. An idea changes because its environment changes. The same basic principle that lay behind the long transformations of the First Symphony is therefore still present, but it has been compressed into a far more concentrated medium.

The **finale** extends this process further. The independent activity of the five instruments becomes increasingly energetic, and the music develops an impressive degree of momentum from relatively restricted resources. But the movement does not simply function as a conventional final affirmation. Its purpose seems broader: it brings together the principal characteristics of the symphony as a whole. The lyrical world of the opening movement has not disappeared. nor has the rhythmic vitality of the second. Instead, the finale allows these contrasting impulses to coexist within an increasingly active argument. What follows is especially revealing. Having generated substantial energy, the symphony refuses the conventional temptation of an emphatic conclusion. The later stages begin to loosen the solidity of what has been established. Textures become more spacious; activity gives way to quieter regions; the music gradually relinquishes its hold on the listener's attention rather than attempting to dominate it.

Finally, the score simply disappears *a niente*. This is not an insignificant compositional gesture. The First Symphony had already avoided an uncomplicatedly triumphant ending. After its great accumulation of orchestral weight, it had arrived with a degree of restraint. *Symphony No. 2* takes the idea considerably further. Here there is not even the rhetoric of arrival. The music withdraws - and the symphony ends not by declaring that nothing more can follow, but by allowing itself to become nothing.

There is something remarkably confident about that decision. It suggests a composer increasingly willing to allow musical form to determine its own necessities rather than fulfilling inherited expectations about how a symphony ought to behave. That independence is perhaps the deepest characteristic of the work. *Symphony No. 2* does not reject tradition in any polemical sense. It has no need to announce itself as an anti-symphony or an experiment in dismantling the genre. Instead, it quietly redefines the terms of the question. A symphony need not depend upon orchestral magnitude. It need not proceed through the opposition of large thematic blocks or culminate in a grand affirmation. It can be five voices thinking together.

That image seems particularly appropriate. For although the individual lines remain distinct throughout the work, their independence does not imply isolation. Each voice acquires meaning through its relationship with the others. Sometimes they converge - or diverge. Sometimes one voice emerges briefly from the texture before being absorbed again into the larger argument. The symphony is therefore both individual and collective.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the work subsequently found a life in performance in Prague, first through its recording at the State Opera House and later at the Klementinum. The music possesses the clarity and concentration of something which depends upon the individuality of its performers. It does not conceal its argument beneath orchestral spectacle. Everything is exposed, and this gives the work its particular intensity.

Viewed within the longer trajectory of the forty-two symphonies, *Symphony No. 2* may eventually prove to be a pivotal early work. It demonstrates that, after the broad landscape and orchestral momentum of the First Symphony, Bullock was already prepared to redefine his own symphonic territory. The journey would not proceed in a straight line towards ever larger orchestras or increasingly monumental structures. Quite the opposite. The Second Symphony discovers that restriction can produce freedom - and by reducing the available forces to five independent voices, Bullock opens a new world of musical possibility: a world in which counterpoint becomes form, texture becomes identity, and silence becomes an active participant in the argument. Perhaps that is what makes the work such an intriguing beginning to the extraordinary five-week sequence that followed. The First Symphony had established the possibility of a journey across a vast landscape. The Second discovers that an equally vast journey can take place between five voices.

Symphony No. 3 Op. 88

Programme Note

Composed in Mersch, Luxembourg, in January 1996 and dedicated to Ulrike Wiedenbach, *Symphony No. 3* belongs to an extraordinary period of creative activity in which Dafydd Bullock wrote three symphonies within the space of only five weeks. Like its immediate predecessor, it is scored for a five-part string ensemble of two violins, viola, violoncello and double bass, but the musical world it creates is markedly broader and more volatile.

The work unfolds in four movements, each presenting a different aspect of the relationship between the five instruments. The **opening movement** moves restlessly between lyricism and fragmentation, allowing individual lines to emerge from the ensemble before drawing them together into more substantial collective statements. Its character is one of continual change: textures expand and contract, moments of expressive breadth are interrupted by more unsettled gestures, and the music seems constantly to question the stability it has only just established.

The **second movement** introduces a sharply contrasting world of rhythmic energy. Rapid changes between duple and triple metre create a sense of continual instability, yet the music never loses its momentum. The shifting rhythmic ground becomes one of the movement's principal expressive characteristics, while more lyrical gestures occasionally emerge from within the activity, suggesting that the impulse towards song remains present even at the height of the movement's energy.

The **third movement** returns to a more inward and spacious world. Marked *molto espressivo*, it allows the five instruments to explore long-breathed melodic lines and more transparent textures, although the underlying sense of instability has not disappeared. The movement eventually dissolves *a niente*, apparently bringing the symphony to a point of disappearance.

Yet this is not the end. The **finale** begins after that silence, restoring movement and gradually rebuilding the energy of the work. As it unfolds, the contrasts explored in the earlier movements begin to coexist: rhythmic vitality, contrapuntal independence and lyrical breadth are brought into a new relationship. The symphony finally turns towards a more sustained and cantabile conclusion, ending not in the disappearance of *Symphony No. 2* but here in an unexpectedly affirmative act of song.

Symphony No. 3 thus transforms the restricted forces of its string ensemble into a remarkably varied dramatic world. Its five instruments become capable of intimacy and collective power, agitation and stillness, fragmentation and continuity. Within the concentrated circumstances of its composition, the work demonstrates a striking expansion of symphonic possibility: the discovery that a symphony need not depend upon size or fixed formal convention, but can create its own world through the changing relationships of sound, movement and silence.

Discussion

If *Symphony No. 2* demonstrated that the symphonic idea could be concentrated into five string voices, *Symphony No. 3* immediately asks what might happen if those same voices were allowed a far greater range of behaviour. Composed during the extraordinary burst of creativity that produced Symphonies Nos. 2, 3 and 4 within five weeks over Christmas and New Year 1995–96, the work does not suggest a composer repeating a newly discovered formula. On the contrary, it reveals an imagination already pushing against the limits it had only just established.

The instrumental forces remain the same: two violins, viola, cello and double bass. Yet the character of the music is strikingly different. *Symphony No. 2* had been a work of concentration, in which the five instruments established a world of closely observed relationships and in which space, silence and the independence of individual lines played an essential role. *Symphony No. 3* retains those discoveries but places them within a more volatile dramatic framework. The music is less willing to remain in one emotional or structural condition. It expands, contracts, interrupts itself, changes its rhythmic footing and repeatedly discovers new possibilities within the same restricted instrumental world.

The **opening movement** establishes this instability almost immediately. There is lyricism here, certainly, but it is not permitted simply to unfold without challenge. Broad gestures emerge and are broken apart; individual lines step forward and are reabsorbed into the ensemble; fuller collective statements dissolve into more exposed textures. The movement acquires its shape through this continual alteration of perspective. What matters is not simply the contrast between one idea and another, but the changing condition of the musical material itself. A gesture which appears stable in one context may become fragmented in another. A line which seems solitary may suddenly acquire the weight of the entire ensemble.

This gives the music a sense of dramatic unpredictability. The five voices are no longer merely learning how to coexist. They are testing the consequences of their independence. Their relationships can be harmonious, but they can also be tense, competitive or unstable. The resulting music possesses a restless energy which distinguishes it sharply from the more inward world of the Second Symphony.

The **second movement** carries this restlessness into rhythm. Its rapid alternation between duple and triple metre prevents the listener from settling comfortably into a regular rhythmic landscape. Yet the effect is not one of confusion. On the contrary, the instability itself becomes a source of momentum. The changing metres propel the music forward, giving it an almost physical sense of movement while continually shifting its centre of gravity.

What is particularly revealing is that the movement does not abandon lyricism in favour of pure rhythmic display. *Cantabile* gestures emerge from within the rapid activity, allowing the impulse towards song to coexist with the impulse towards movement. This tension may prove to be one of the important threads in the larger symphonic journey. From the beginning, Bullock's music seems reluctant to choose permanently between melody and momentum. The two impulses continually challenge one another, and much of the energy of *Symphony No. 3* arises from precisely that refusal to allow either one to dominate.

The **third movement** provides the most striking contrast. After the rhythmic volatility of what has preceded it, the return to a quieter, more expressive world feels almost like the rediscovery of an earlier memory. The five instruments once again inhabit a spacious environment in which melodic lines are given room to breathe. Yet the tranquillity is not identical to that of *Symphony No. 2*.

Something has changed. The music has passed through the instability of the earlier movements, and that experience seems to remain within it.

The lines may now be longer and the textures more transparent, but the sense of movement beneath the surface has not entirely disappeared. The instruments continue to negotiate their relationships rather than settling into a conventional hierarchy of melody and accompaniment. The movement therefore acquires a quality of inwardness which is more questioning than peaceful, more reflective than static. Its conclusion is one of the most important moments in the symphony. The music disappears *a niente*.

Had this been the end of the work, the gesture might have carried the same kind of final significance that it possessed in *Symphony No. 2*. But *Symphony No. 3* does something quite different. The disappearance occurs before the finale. The music vanishes, and then it begins again. That simple structural decision changes the meaning of silence. In the previous symphony, disappearance had represented the final relinquishing of sound. Here, silence becomes part of a larger continuity. The work is able to pass through a point of apparent extinction and yet continue beyond it.

The finale therefore possesses a particular significance. It is not merely the fourth section of the work or the conventional movement designed to bring everything to a conclusion. It is what happens after silence. The symphony resumes its argument, gradually restoring activity and allowing the individual instruments once again to enter into a more energetic relationship.

As the movement develops, however, it does not simply return to the restless volatility of the earlier music. Something broader begins to emerge. The rhythmic activity remains important, and the independence of the five voices is never abandoned, but there is an increasing sense of lyrical expansion. The work begins to rediscover the possibility of sustained song.

Its conclusion is therefore especially striking. After the fragmentation of the first movement, the rhythmic instability of the second and the disappearance of the third, the symphony ultimately chooses not to vanish. It chooses to sing.

There is something unexpectedly moving in that decision. The final cantabile character does not erase the tensions that have preceded it, nor does it provide an easy or simplistic resolution. Rather, the music seems to have passed through a series of contrasting states and emerged with the capacity for a broader, more sustained utterance.

Seen in relation to the first two symphonies, the work marks a significant expansion of possibility. *Symphony No. 1* had established the importance of the long journey: the gradual accumulation of energy, the transformation of material and the sense of large-scale movement through musical space. *Symphony No. 2* had demonstrated that the symphonic argument could survive the radical reduction of forces, becoming a drama of relationships between individual voices. *Symphony No. 3* now takes that reduced world and discovers within it a much greater range of contrast, instability and renewal.

The progression is remarkable, particularly when one remembers the extraordinary speed with which these works were written. There is no sense that the Second and Third Symphonies represent successive drafts of the same idea. Each appears to pose a different question about what a symphony might be. The second explores concentration and relationship; the third discovers contrast and transformation. The same five instruments, which had formed a closely observed musical community in the earlier work, are now capable of creating a dramatically more varied and unpredictable world.

Perhaps that is the most significant achievement of *Symphony No. 3*. It demonstrates that the limits imposed by a particular instrumental medium are not necessarily limitations of imagination. Having chosen five string voices, Bullock does not attempt to disguise their small number by writing as though they were a conventional orchestra. Instead, he discovers what those particular voices can become when their relationships are continually reimagined. They can be intimate or collective, lyrical or violently active, rhythmically unstable or broadly sustained. They can disappear into silence and then return.

The symphony therefore possesses an important place at the beginning of the larger journey. It is a work in which the idea of transformation becomes more adventurous. Musical material is not simply developed; the conditions under which it exists are continually altered. Rhythm loses its stable ground. Silence ceases to be merely an ending. Individual voices become capable of forming, dissolving and reforming new musical communities. And, after all this, the work reaches its conclusion not through conquest or grand assertion, but through the rediscovery of song.

The First Symphony travelled through a landscape. The Second discovered an entire world within five voices. The Third allows those voices to lose their certainty, to move through agitation and silence, and finally to find a new coherence. It is, in the deepest sense, a symphony of renewal.

Symphony No. 4 Op. 89

Programme Note

Composed in Mersch, Luxembourg, in January 1996, *Symphony No. 4* completes an extraordinary period of creative activity during which Dafydd Bullock wrote three symphonies within the space of only five weeks. Like its two immediate predecessors, the work is scored for a five-part string ensemble of two violins, viola, violoncello and double bass, yet it occupies a distinct musical world. In four movements, the symphony brings together rhythmic energy, lyrical breadth and contrapuntal independence within a design of increasing formal coherence.

The **first movement** begins with an immediate sense of purpose. Firmly articulated rhythms and the active exchange of material between the instruments create a strong forward momentum, while the constantly changing distribution of the musical lines prevents the texture from becoming fixed. Individual instruments emerge briefly from the collective argument, but their voices remain part of a larger process in which energy is continually redirected rather than interrupted.

The **second movement** opens a broader and more spacious world. Sustained lines and a more expansive sense of time allow the expressive character of the five instruments to come into sharper focus. The ensemble moves between passages of collective sonority and more transparent textures in which individual voices emerge with particular clarity. The contrast with the first movement is considerable, yet the music retains a sense of underlying continuity.

The **third movement** turns further inward. Its quieter, more restrained character creates a moment of reflection at the centre of the symphony, allowing the relationship between the individual instruments to become more exposed. Here, as elsewhere in the work, the restricted forces of the ensemble become a source of variety rather than limitation. The changing distances between the voices and the alternation between union and separation become part of the expressive substance of the music.

The **finale** restores a more immediate sense of movement, but its energy gradually develops into something broader and more lyrical. Rather than maintaining a simple opposition between rhythmic propulsion and melodic expression, the movement increasingly allows these two qualities to coexist. The symphony moves towards a sustained conclusion in which the restless activity of the earlier movements is gradually absorbed into a more spacious and settled sonority.

Symphony No. 4 therefore represents a significant stage in the early development of Bullock's symphonic thought. Within the intimate medium of five string voices, it creates a work of considerable structural range, in which contrast does not lead to fragmentation but contributes to an increasingly coherent musical whole.

Discussion

The extraordinary circumstances in which Symphonies Nos. 2, 3 and 4 were composed make it tempting to regard them as a single creative event. Written within the space of five weeks over Christmas and New Year 1995 - 96, they emerged with such rapidity that one might expect them to share a common formula or to represent successive variations upon a single idea. The closer one looks, however, the less convincing that explanation becomes. Each of the three works appears to investigate a different possibility. *Symphony No. 2* discovers concentration; *Symphony No. 3* tests volatility and contrast; *Symphony No. 4* begins to gather those discoveries into a more deliberate architectural form.

The instrumental forces remain unchanged. Once again the symphony is written for two violins, viola, violoncello and double bass. Yet there is no sense that the composer is simply returning to a familiar medium because it is available. The five-part string ensemble has become a laboratory in which increasingly different conceptions of symphonic form can be explored. By the time *Symphony No. 4* appears, the individual voices have already acquired considerable independence. The question is no longer simply how they may coexist, nor even how their contrasting identities might generate instability. The more significant question has become how these independent elements can contribute to a larger and more coherent design.

The **first movement** establishes that sense of purpose with remarkable directness. The music begins with firm rhythmic definition and an unmistakable forward impulse. Where the opening movement of *Symphony No. 3* had seemed prepared to challenge or disrupt its own assumptions almost immediately, *Symphony No. 4* appears more confident in establishing a central direction. This does not mean that the music is less varied. On the contrary, the texture changes continually, instrumental responsibilities are redistributed, and moments of greater individual prominence emerge from the collective movement. But the contrasts feel contained within a more clearly defined structural argument.

The difference is one of perspective. In *Symphony No. 3*, interruption had become a creative force in its own right. In *Symphony No. 4,* interruption is absorbed into continuity. A sudden reduction of texture or the emergence of a solo line does not create a separate musical world; instead, it alters the perspective from which the larger argument is heard. The symphony has learned how to change direction without losing its sense of destination.

That development is particularly significant when viewed against the First Symphony. *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon* had demonstrated from the beginning an instinct for large-scale movement and the gradual accumulation of energy. Yet its methods were fundamentally orchestral: momentum could be generated through the expansion of instrumental forces and the progressive increase of sonority. The Second and Third Symphonies had been forced, by their radically reduced resources, to discover other means of creating scale. In *Symphony No. 4,* these experiences begin to converge. The work retains the intimacy and independence of the five-part ensemble while recovering something of the larger architectural confidence already present in the First Symphony.

The **second movement** provides an essential expansion of the work's emotional and temporal range. The driving energy of the opening is replaced by broader sustained lines and a more spacious sense of musical time. Yet the movement is not simply a conventional retreat into lyricism. Its importance lies in the way it changes the listener's perception of the ensemble itself. The five instruments, previously involved in rhythmic propulsion and active exchange, are now given greater room in which to shape extended gestures. Their relationship becomes less immediately driven and more dependent upon the subtle balance of register, colour and line.

Here again the double bass and cello play an important role in establishing the character of the musical space. The lower register is not merely the foundation upon which the upper instruments operate; it becomes an active part of the expressive argument. This has been one of the recurring discoveries of the string symphonies, but in *Symphony No. 4* it contributes to a greater sense of structural balance. The entire vertical range of the ensemble becomes available as an expressive field.

The **third movement** takes the process of inwardness still further. Its restrained and transparent textures create what feels almost like the internal centre of the symphony. Having established momentum in the first movement and breadth in the second, the music now enters a region in which the individual voices are heard with greater exposure. The sense of space that had been such an important element of *Symphony No. 2* returns, but it returns transformed by what has happened in the intervening works.

In *Symphony No. 2,* space had been one of the conditions from which the symphony grew. The music had discovered its identity partly through the distances between the voices and the significance of silence. In *Symphony No. 4,* spaciousness feels less like a starting point than a destination reached after movement. The listener arrives at this more reflective world carrying the memory of the rhythmic activity and broader gestures that have preceded it.

This gives the four-movement structure a particularly convincing sense of progression. The movements are clearly contrasted, but they do not behave as independent panels arranged according to convention. Each changes the conditions under which musical time is experienced. The first presses forward with determination. The second broadens the field of experience. The third suspends and reflects. By the time the finale arrives, the listener has already travelled through several different relationships to movement, weight and space.

The **final movement** therefore does not simply restore the energy of the opening. It does so from a changed perspective. Its rhythmic activity possesses an assurance which distinguishes it from the deliberate instability of *Symphony No. 3*. The music can move rapidly and vigorously without seeming compelled to prove its energy. The individual lines remain active, but they increasingly contribute to broader textures and more sustained gestures.

It is here that one of the most interesting developments of the symphony becomes apparent. Throughout the earlier works there has been a recurring tension between two impulses: the desire to move and the desire to sing. In the First Symphony, broad melodic gestures had often been set against persistent rhythmic propulsion. *Symphony No. 2* had internalised that relationship within the interaction of five independent voices. *Symphony No. 3* had allowed lyricism and rhythmic instability to collide with considerable dramatic force.

Symphony No. 4 begins to dissolve the opposition. As the finale develops, the rhythmic energy does not simply cease in order to make room for a lyrical idea. Rather, the music gradually discovers how movement and *cantabile* expression can occupy the same musical space. The arrival of a more sustained lyrical character therefore feels like a transformation of the existing material rather than the introduction of a contrasting world. The symphony has not abandoned momentum. It has absorbed it into something broader.

That process determines the character of the ending. Neither the emphatic arrival of a traditional symphonic conclusion nor the disappearance of *Symphony No. 2* is chosen. Nor does the work conclude simply by returning to the lyrical affirmation which had ended *Symphony No. 3*. Instead, the music gradually settles. Its earlier activity is relinquished, its textures become more sustained, and the conclusion creates a sense of resolution without rhetorical excess.

This is perhaps the quality that most distinguishes *Symphony No. 4* within the remarkable sequence of which it forms the final part. It is not that the work contains fewer contrasts than its predecessors. It is that the contrasts increasingly appear to belong to one larger architecture. The symphony seems to understand where its opposing forces belong.

That sense of formal confidence is all the more striking when one remembers the speed with which the work was composed. There is no impression of a composer hastily assembling material from recently discovered techniques. Instead, *Symphony No. 4* gives the impression that the preceding experiments have already begun to settle into a more instinctive language. The concentrated intimacy of *Symphony No. 2* and the volatility of *Symphony No. 3* are not rejected; they are absorbed.

For this reason, the work occupies an important position in the early symphonic journey. It marks a point at which the composer appears to have gained a clearer sense of the possibilities contained within the medium he had chosen. Five string voices are sufficient not only for intimacy and contrapuntal independence, not only for rhythmic instability and dramatic contrast, but for the construction of a sustained and proportioned symphonic argument.

The achievement of *Symphony No. 4* lies therefore in its sense of integration. Its different movements inhabit contrasting worlds, but those worlds are related by a common concern with the transformation of energy. Rhythmic activity becomes breadth; breadth gives way to reflection; reflection prepares the conditions for renewed movement. The symphony does not move through these states mechanically, but allows each to alter the meaning of what follows.

In this sense, the work represents a quiet but important act of synthesis. The first symphony had established the importance of the journey. The second had shown that a symphony could find its scale within the relationship of individual voices. The third had opened that concentrated world to instability, contrast and renewal. *Symphony No. 4* now discovers how these possibilities might coexist within a more deliberate shape.

The result is not a conclusion to the symphonic journey, of course. We have only reached the fourth work, and the direction ahead remains entirely unknown. But it does feel like the end of a first chapter. Within five extraordinary weeks, the symphonic imagination had moved from concentration to instability and finally towards integration. *Symphony No. 4* does not close that creative explosion with a gesture of finality. It does something more interesting. It suggests that, having discovered what these five voices could do, the composer was beginning to discover how to make them belong to a larger whole. That is why the work feels less like an ending than a moment of arrival. Certainly not the end of the journey, but the moment at which the journey begins to recognise its own shape.

Symphony No. 5 Op. 97

Spring

Programme Note

Composed in Buschdorf, Luxembourg, in 1996 and dedicated to Ulrike Wiedenbach, *Symphony No. 5, Spring*, marks a striking change of scale and colour in Dafydd Bullock's early symphonic development. Following the three preceding symphonies, each written for a five-part string ensemble, the work returns to the resources of the full orchestra. Its title, however, should not be understood as an invitation to a picturesque musical depiction of spring. Rather, the symphony seems to embody the idea of renewal through the expansion and transformation of musical energy. The composer write: *a turning point, reflecting a significant change in my life in 1996 and reflected in this happier, more consonant music*.

The **opening movement** immediately establishes a broad orchestral landscape in which strings, wind and brass continually enter into changing relationships. Full sonorities alternate with more transparent passages, allowing individual instruments and smaller groups to emerge from the larger orchestral fabric. The movement develops through a process of continual transformation, in which melodic ideas and rhythmic gestures acquire new characters as they pass between different instrumental colours.

The **second movement** introduces a more direct and energetic world. Rhythmic activity becomes increasingly prominent, and the orchestra is set in vigorous motion. Yet the movement is far more than a display of orchestral brilliance. The constantly changing distribution of material gives individual instrumental voices a distinctive role within the larger texture, creating a sense of movement that arises as much from changing relationships as from rhythm itself.

A more reflective atmosphere emerges in the **third movement.** Here the orchestra becomes more transparent, and the strings in particular create a spacious and inward world. After the activity of the preceding movements, the music allows individual lines greater freedom to breathe, rediscovering within the larger orchestral medium something of the intimacy and independence that had characterised the three string symphonies.

The **final movement** restores energy and momentum, drawing upon the full range of orchestral colour. As the music develops, however, its vitality is not directed towards a simple gesture of triumph. The accumulated energy is gradually transformed, and the symphony eventually moves towards a more restrained conclusion, ending quietly with *pizzicato* strings.

Spring is therefore a work in which the return of the orchestra represents more than an increase in instrumental scale. The concentrated explorations of the preceding symphonies have altered the composer's relationship with orchestral sound. Individual voices remain important within the larger ensemble, while the contrasts between mass and transparency, collective power and intimacy, become essential elements of the symphonic argument.

The result is a work of renewal in the deepest musical sense: an orchestral world rediscovered through the experience of concentration.

Discussion

After the remarkable concentration of Symphonies Nos. 2, 3 and 4, *Symphony No. 5* arrives as a sudden expansion of the horizon. The three preceding works, composed within the space of five weeks over Christmas and New Year 1995 - 96, had explored the possibilities of a remarkably restricted medium: two violins, viola, cello and double bass. Within those five voices, Bullock had discovered intimacy, rhythmic instability, contrast, space and a growing sense of formal architecture. With *Spring*, the full orchestra returns.

But this is not simply a return to the world of the First Symphony - something has happened in the meantime. The title itself suggests renewal, and the music does indeed possess a sense of release after the concentrated string works which precede it. Yet *Spring* is not a conventional musical portrait of the season. There are no obvious attempts to imitate birdsong, flowing water or pastoral contentment. Its sense of spring lies at a deeper level. The symphony seems concerned with the return of energy, the rediscovery of colour and the expansion of a musical world which has recently learned how much can be achieved with very little. The composer write: *a turning point, reflecting a significant change in my life in 1996 and reflected in this happier, more consonant music*.

The **opening movement** immediately makes the difference in scale apparent. Wind, brass and strings establish a broad orchestral sonority, yet the music does not simply exploit the orchestra as a single monumental mass. Individual instruments and smaller groups repeatedly emerge from within the larger texture. A line may appear in the strings and then acquire a new identity when transferred to woodwind; a full orchestral statement may dissolve into a more exposed passage in which only a handful of instruments remain.

This is one of the most significant characteristics of the symphony. The experience of writing for five independent string voices has not been left behind when the orchestra returns. On the contrary, the large ensemble often behaves as though it were an expanded community of individual participants. The orchestra becomes capable of forming and reforming different relationships within itself. It can act collectively, but it can also divide into smaller societies of sound. That gives the orchestration an unusually structural role. Instrumental colour is not merely decorative. A change of orchestration can alter the meaning of the musical material itself. A gesture transferred from one instrumental family to another becomes something different, not because its notes have changed, but because its expressive environment has been transformed.

In this respect, Symphony No. 5 carries forward one of the most important discoveries of the string symphonies. Music is shaped not only by melody, harmony and rhythm, but by the constantly changing relationships between voices. The first movement unfolds through this process of transformation. Its large orchestral statements are balanced by moments of greater transparency, and its sense of growth arises less from simple repetition than from continual renewal. Material returns, but it returns changed by colour, register, texture and context. The orchestra is therefore not simply larger than the ensemble of the previous works. It offers a vastly enlarged field in which relationships can be explored.

The **second movement** changes the emphasis towards rhythm and motion. Here the energy is more immediate and physical, and the orchestra is set into vigorous activity. Yet once again the writing resists uniformity. The movement continually redistributes its energy, allowing different instrumental groups to assume prominence before giving way to others. This creates a particularly vivid sense of orchestral movement. The listener is not merely carried forward by the pulse. Attention itself is constantly redirected. The ear moves through the orchestra, following changing patterns of colour and emphasis.

There is something almost theatrical about this. Not theatrical in the sense of spectacle or external drama, but in the way different instrumental personalities appear, interact and withdraw. A solo wind instrument can suddenly emerge from the surrounding texture; the brass can introduce a new weight into the argument; the strings can resume their role as the principal carriers of momentum.

The orchestra becomes a society. This idea has, in fact, been present in embryonic form since *Symphony No. 2*. There, the symphonic argument depended upon the interaction of five independent voices. *Symphony No. 5* transfers that principle to a much larger world. The important discovery is that enlargement does not have to mean homogenisation. More instruments do not simply create more sound. They create more possible relationships.

The **third movement** offers a necessary change of perspective. After the expansion and activity of the earlier movements, the music turns inward. The orchestral texture becomes more spacious, and the strings once again assume a particularly important expressive role. In this quieter environment, one can hear an echo of the concentrated world of Symphonies Nos. 2–4.

The return is not literal. *Symphony No. 5* does not suddenly become another string symphony. The presence of the larger orchestra continues to shape the musical space. But the lessons of the earlier works remain audible in the care with which individual lines are allowed to emerge and in the significance given to transparency and separation. This movement therefore acts as more than a conventional slow episode. It changes the listener's relationship to the scale of the entire work. After the orchestral abundance of the earlier movements, restraint becomes newly expressive. Silence and space acquire greater significance precisely because the listener has already experienced the full resources of the orchestra.

The **final movement** restores momentum, and with it the full range of orchestral colour. There is an unmistakable sense of renewed energy, appropriate to the title of the symphony, but the work does not move towards an uncomplicated gesture of triumph. The accumulated activity is gradually transformed, and the expectation of a great symphonic climax is subtly undermined.

This is characteristic of the journey so far. *Symphony No. 2* had ended by disappearing *a niente*. *Symphony No. 3* had passed through silence before beginning again and eventually rediscovering song. *Symphony No. 4* had sought something closer to resolution. Now *Symphony No. 5*, after restoring the full orchestra and exploring its enormous range of colour and energy, chooses once again to avoid the obvious gesture.

The symphony ends quietly, with *pizzicato* strings. That conclusion is especially revealing. After such a large orchestral journey, Bullock does not feel compelled to prove the scale of the work by ending with its greatest possible sound. The orchestra has already demonstrated its power. The final gesture therefore has no need to compete with what has preceded it. The music simply lets go. There is a quiet confidence in that decision, and it contributes greatly to the particular character of *Spring*. Renewal does not necessarily require a blaze of affirmation. It can also consist in the recognition that energy has fulfilled its purpose and may now be released.

Viewed within the first five symphonies, the work occupies a particularly important position. *Symphony No. 1* had established the possibility of the large symphonic journey, with its broad orchestral landscape and sense of accumulated movement. The three symphonies which followed had subjected the symphonic idea to radical concentration, discovering how much could be achieved through the interaction of only five string voices. *Symphony No. 5* brings these two experiences together. The orchestra returns, but it returns changed. The large-scale imagination of the First Symphony is now informed by the intimacy of the Second, the volatility of the Third and the growing architectural confidence of the Fourth. The individual instrumental voice has become more important. Transparency can coexist with mass. Rhythmic energy can be interrupted by

reflection without destroying the larger continuity. The result is perhaps the first symphony in which the earlier journey begins to feel genuinely cumulative. The preceding works are not simply steps that have been left behind. Their discoveries have entered the musical language of the new work.

This is why the title *Spring* seems so apt. Not because the symphony describes the outward appearance of the season, but because it represents a kind of creative renewal. After the intense concentration of the string symphonies, colour returns. Space expands. New instrumental relationships become possible. The musical world opens again, yet it does so with greater awareness than before.

The First Symphony had taught the composer how to think on a large scale. The three string symphonies had demonstrated that large ideas do not depend upon large forces. *Symphony No. 5* discovers what happens when those lessons are brought together. It is not simply a return to the orchestra but rather a return to the orchestra after having learned how to listen differently. This makes *Spring* feel like more than the fifth stage of the journey - indeed it feels like the beginning of a new chapter.

Symphony No. 6 Op. 100

Programme Note

Symphony No. 6 marks a significant expansion of Dafydd Bullock's exploration of the possibilities of the string orchestra. Written for five-part strings, the work unfolds in five contrasting movements and exploits the ensemble not merely as a homogeneous body but as a constantly changing community of individual voices.

The **opening movement** begins with an expressive melodic line from which a broader musical landscape gradually emerges. Lyricism and momentum are closely connected: what begins in reflective, spacious textures slowly acquires greater energy and rhythmic purpose. The **second movement** provides a sharp contrast, its rapid movement and restless exchanges generating an atmosphere of propulsion and vitality.

At the centre of the symphony, the **third movement** turns inward. Here the texture becomes more transparent and exploratory, allowing solo lines, divided strings and contrasting instrumental colours to emerge from the larger ensemble. The distinction between individual and collective voices becomes an important element of the musical argument.

The **fourth movement** restores a more direct and assertive character, while continuing the symphony's concern with the transformation and redistribution of musical material. In the finale, rapid sextuplet figures create a powerful sense of continuous motion. These figures pass through different registers and instrumental groups, repeatedly gathering energy and releasing it, before driving the work towards its conclusion.

Throughout the symphony, contrasting elements are rarely allowed simply to remain separate. Lyricism becomes movement; individual lines merge into collective sonority; moments of stillness generate renewed momentum. *Symphony No. 6* is therefore shaped less as a sequence of independent movements than as a continuing exploration of contrast, transformation and return. This was written in Buschdorf, Luxembourg in 1997, and is dedicated to Ulrike Wiedenbach.

Discussion

Symphony No. 6 occupies a particularly interesting position in Dafydd Bullock's symphonic development. Coming after the earlier experiments with the string symphony, it demonstrates that the medium had ceased to be merely an alternative to the full orchestra and had become a territory with its own independent possibilities. The five-part string writing of this work does not attempt to compensate for the absence of winds, brass or percussion. Instead, it discovers scale through other means: through duration, architecture, rhythmic energy, register, density and, above all, the continually changing relationship between individual and collective voices.

The symphony's five-movement design immediately suggests a broader conception than that of a conventional fast - slow - fast structure. Each movement inhabits a distinct expressive world, yet the work is held together by deeper preoccupations. Again and again, the music establishes a particular state and then subjects it to change. A melodic line gathers momentum; an energetic texture dissolves into something more exposed; an individual voice emerges from the ensemble only to be absorbed once more into the larger body. The central concern is therefore not simply contrast but transformation.

The **first movement** establishes this principle with considerable subtlety. Its opening does not announce the symphony with dramatic proclamation. Instead, the music seems to grow gradually into consciousness. The expressive melodic writing creates an initially spacious environment in which the listener becomes aware of the relationship between line and the silence or relative stillness surrounding it. As the texture broadens, the lower instruments increasingly alter the musical perspective. What began as melody acquires weight and direction, and the movement gathers energy without ever abandoning its original lyrical character.

This is an important aspect of Bullock's method. Development is not necessarily the traditional process by which one idea is broken apart, recombined and subjected to formal argument. Here, development often consists of discovering what else the material might become. The lyrical impulse does not disappear when rhythmic activity increases; rather, it finds another form of existence. The distinction between melody and momentum becomes increasingly difficult to maintain.

The **second movement** brings this tendency into much sharper focus. Its energy is immediate, and its rapid writing gives the impression of music constantly pressing forward. Yet beneath this active surface lies a carefully controlled organisation of contrasting episodes. The music repeatedly establishes momentum, interrupts it, redirects it and begins again. The sectional nature of the movement is therefore not merely formal punctuation. Each new departure alters the perspective from which the preceding material is understood.

What is particularly striking is the absence of any simple hierarchy between melodic and accompanying instruments. Musical responsibility continually shifts. The upper strings may dominate one moment, only for the lower instruments to become the source of propulsion or structural stability in the next. The ensemble behaves less like a traditional string orchestra divided into melody and accompaniment than like a group of constantly changing forces.

The **central movement** represents the symphony's most inward-looking territory. Here the importance of the individual voice becomes particularly apparent. Solo writing, divided textures and contrasting modes of articulation allow the larger ensemble repeatedly to fragment into smaller musical units. The listener becomes aware not simply of a collective string sound but of the personalities within it.

This gives the movement an almost chamber-musical quality, although its scale remains symphonic. Indeed, the tension between those two possibilities is one of the work's most interesting characteristics. The symphony repeatedly asks whether its identity lies in the collective power of the ensemble or in the expressive freedom of its individual members. It refuses to choose between them. The individual voice becomes meaningful because it emerges from the larger body, while the collective sound acquires greater significance because the listener has become aware of the voices contained within it.

The **fourth movement** restores a more direct and extrovert manner, but it does not represent a simple return to the energy of the second. The experience of the central movement has changed the terms of the argument. Individual gestures and collective statements now coexist more freely, and the music seems increasingly conscious of its own capacity to move between different states. The contrasts of texture and articulation are no longer interruptions in a continuous argument but part of the argument itself.

By the **finale**, rhythmic motion becomes the principal unifying force. The persistent sextuplet figures create an almost physical sense of propulsion, but their importance lies in more than their speed. They function as a current running through the movement, appearing in different registers and instrumental groups and repeatedly altering the balance of the ensemble. Momentum is generated, arrested, transferred and regenerated. The music does not simply race towards its conclusion; it continually rediscovers the means by which it can continue.

This is perhaps the point at which the symphony's underlying conception becomes clearest. The work is not constructed from a small number of fixed ideas whose identity must remain recognisable throughout. Its coherence arises from behaviour. Musical ideas are understood through what happens to them: how they expand, contract, accelerate, become isolated, merge with other material or reappear in altered circumstances.

That approach gives *Symphony No. 6* an unusually organic quality. Its five movements are very different in character, but they appear to belong to the same world because they share the same instinct for transformation. The relationship between lyricism and rhythmic energy, between individuality and collectivity, between transparency and density, becomes more important than any single thematic connection.

In this sense, *Symphony No. 6* represents a significant new stage in Bullock's symphonic journey. The earlier string symphonies had demonstrated the possibilities of concentration and experiment within a reduced medium. Here those discoveries are absorbed into a work of greater architectural ambition. The result is not a miniature symphony, nor an orchestral conception transferred to strings, but a genuine symphonic argument whose scale arises from the way musical forces are organised and transformed.

There is, perhaps, a particular freedom in this. The symphony seems unconcerned with proving what a symphony ought to be. It simply proceeds from the possibilities of the material before it. The five movements create a succession of different musical environments, yet beneath their contrasts lies a persistent sense of continuity: the conviction that music is never entirely static, that every state contains within it the possibility of another.

Symphony No. 6 therefore feels like a point of renewal. It retains the intimacy and flexibility that the string medium makes possible, while extending those qualities across a considerably broader formal canvas. The symphonic journey has moved beyond its first exploratory stages. Here, the discoveries of those earlier works begin to function as part of a more assured and expansive language.

Symphony No. 7 Op. 127

Rhagrybudd - Premonition

Programme Note

Written in Buschdorf, Luxembourg in 2000 and dedicated to the composer's mother, *Symphony No. 7* was composed across the period immediately before and after her death. Its Welsh title, *Rhagrybudd*, meaning *Premonition*, suggests the awareness of something approaching before it can fully be understood or named. The music does not attempt to describe events, however. Instead, the idea of anticipation seems to shape the symphony from within.

The work unfolds as a single, continuous orchestral structure. It begins quietly and sparingly, with an isolated melodic gesture gradually acquiring companions and expanding into a larger orchestral world. From this restrained beginning, tension and activity accumulate. Broad melodic lines give way to increasingly animated rhythmic figures, individual instruments emerge from and disappear into the orchestral texture, and passages of considerable energy are repeatedly interrupted by moments of stillness and reflection.

Throughout the symphony, there is a persistent sense of movement towards something that remains just beyond reach. Musical ideas gather momentum, disperse and re-form; textures grow in density before suddenly becoming transparent again. The contrast between the power of the full orchestra and the vulnerability of individual instrumental voices becomes an important part of the work's expressive character.

In its closing stages, the music gradually returns to the more spacious world of the opening. Familiar melodic shapes reappear, but they are heard in an altered context. The symphony therefore ends not by providing a conventional resolution, but by returning to its point of departure with a changed perspective.

Rhagrybudd – Premonition is a work shaped by anticipation, memory and transformation. Its emotional power lies not in explicit narrative, but in the sense that the journey has altered the meaning of what was there at the beginning.

Discussion

Symphony No. 7 occupies a distinctive and deeply personal position in Dafydd Bullock's symphonic output. Written in 2000, immediately before and after the death of the composer's mother, it bears the Welsh title *Rhagrybudd - Premonition*. Yet the work resists any simple interpretation as autobiographical narrative. There is no attempt to depict illness, death or mourning in a literal musical manner. Its relationship with the circumstances of its composition is more profound and less easily defined. The experience of anticipation seems to have entered the very structure of the music.

A premonition is not knowledge. It is the sense of something approaching before its nature can be fully grasped. It belongs to a territory between awareness and uncertainty, between the present and something that has not yet happened. *Symphony No. 7* inhabits precisely this territory. Throughout its large, continuous structure, the music repeatedly appears to be moving towards an event, a revelation or a point of arrival, yet that arrival is continually deferred. Energy accumulates, tension intensifies and the orchestra gathers its forces, only for the music to change direction, fall away into silence or expose a single instrumental voice.

The **opening** is therefore of considerable importance. The symphony does not begin with the confident assertion traditionally associated with a large orchestral work. Instead, it emerges. An isolated line is heard, and only gradually does the surrounding orchestral world begin to reveal itself. The effect is one of something already present but not yet understood. The music seems to arrive from a silence that remains psychologically active around it.

From these sparse beginnings, the symphonic argument gradually expands. New instrumental voices enter, textures acquire greater density and the initial restraint gives way to increasingly active music. Yet the sense of anticipation never disappears. The development of the material is less a process of straightforward thematic argument than an accumulation of pressure. A gesture becomes more insistent; a rhythmic figure grows into a larger texture; activity spreads from one instrumental group to another until the orchestra itself seems caught within a continually intensifying current.

This gives the work an unusual formal character. Although the score is articulated into a sequence of clearly marked sections, the listener experiences the symphony as a single extended journey. The sectional divisions do not create separate episodes in the conventional sense. Rather, they mark changes in perspective. The same underlying tension assumes different forms: melodic, rhythmic, orchestral and psychological.

One of the most striking aspects of this process is the continual relationship between the individual and the collective. The full orchestra is capable of generating formidable energy, yet Bullock repeatedly withdraws from its massed sonority. A solo instrument emerges; the texture suddenly becomes transparent; an individual line seems momentarily to stand apart from the surrounding movement. These moments are not merely passages of contrast. They create a sense of vulnerability within the larger orchestral structure.

The effect is particularly powerful because the individual voice never entirely escapes the symphonic world around it. It emerges from that world and is eventually reabsorbed into it. The orchestra therefore becomes something more than a source of colour or dramatic scale. It behaves almost as a changing environment within which individual voices appear, struggle for space and disappear again.

As the symphony progresses, rhythmic activity becomes an increasingly important source of momentum. Repeated figures gather force and spread across the orchestra, creating passages of considerable propulsion. But the music never simply drives towards a conventional climax. Again and again, the momentum is interrupted. Space reappears. A sustained sonority replaces movement. The anticipated destination is postponed.

It is here that the title *Premonition* becomes inseparable from the symphony's musical method. The work seems always to be approaching something, but what that something is remains undefined. The listener experiences anticipation without certainty. In the circumstances of the work's composition, written across the boundary created by the death of the composer's mother, that uncertainty acquires an unavoidable emotional resonance. Yet the symphony's strength lies precisely in its refusal to explain itself.

Music can accommodate experiences that language tends to separate into before and after. In *Symphony No. 7,* those two conditions seem to coexist. The earlier parts of the work are not simply music composed before an event, while the later parts are not simply music composed afterwards. The entire symphony is transformed by the fact that it crosses that boundary. What begins in anticipation eventually becomes memory.

This is nowhere more apparent than in the closing stages. After the immense accumulation of activity and tension, the orchestral world gradually begins to empty. The music moves towards a transparency that recalls the opening, and material recognisably connected with the beginning returns. But this is not a conventional recapitulation. The symphony does not turn back the clock.

The return is transformed by everything that has happened in between. What was initially heard as a gesture of emergence now carries the weight of remembrance. The opening had seemed to ask a question, although the question could not be clearly formulated. At the end, the music does not answer it. Instead, it returns to the question itself with an altered consciousness. The listener recognises the musical landscape, but can no longer inhabit it in the same way.

This gives the ending an extraordinary ambiguity. It is neither triumphal nor conventionally tragic. Nor is it simply nostalgic. The music seems to acknowledge that return and restoration are not the same thing. One can encounter again something that is familiar while knowing that the circumstances in which it was first known have disappeared. That, perhaps, is the deepest emotional principle of *Rhagrybudd*. Premonition belongs to the world before an event, but memory belongs to the world after it. *Symphony No. 7* moves through both territories and ultimately allows them to meet.

Within the developing sequence of Bullock's symphonies, the work represents a significant deepening of psychological expression. The earlier *Symphony No. 6* had explored transformation through the interaction of contrasting musical states: lyricism becoming momentum, individual voices becoming collective sonority, stillness giving way to movement. *Symphony No. 7* takes the principle of transformation into a more concentrated and inward territory. Its central concern is not simply how musical material can change, but how the experience of change itself alters our perception of what has gone before.

The full orchestra is essential to this conception, but Bullock uses it with remarkable discrimination. Grandeur and power are available when required, yet they are never allowed to become permanent conditions. Silence, sparseness and instrumental individuality are equally important. The orchestra breathes, gathers, fragments and remembers.

For that reason, *Symphony No. 7* feels like a work in which form and experience have become inseparable. Its structure does not merely contain an emotional journey; the journey is enacted

through the structure itself. The gradual accumulation of tension, the repeated deferral of arrival, the emergence of solitary voices and the eventual return to the musical world of the beginning all contribute to a profound sense of passage. The symphony begins in a world that does not yet know what is coming. It ends in a world that cannot un-know it. In that sense, *Rhagrybudd – Premonition* is not simply a symphony about foreboding. It is a work shaped by the fragile and irreversible boundary between anticipation and memory.

Symphony No. 8 Op. 130

Programme Note

Symphony No. 8 returns to the medium of the string orchestra, but approaches it in a markedly different way from the earlier string symphonies. Written in three movements, the work treats the five-part ensemble as a constantly changing organism, capable of assuming sharply contrasting identities through changes of texture, register, articulation and tempo.

The **first movement** begins with an immediate sense of purpose, but its onward movement is continually interrupted and redirected. Sustained sonorities alternate with more active writing, changing metres alter the sense of momentum, and lyrical passages emerge from more rhythmically charged material. Rather than following a conventional pattern of thematic development, the music seems to move through a series of contrasting musical environments, each of which changes the listener's perspective on what has gone before.

The second **movement** opens in a more lyrical and expressive world. Its singing character is gradually disrupted by a sudden acceleration into much faster and more energetic music, before the earlier tempo and atmosphere return. The movement is therefore shaped by contrast, but also by the sense that its apparently different musical states belong to the same continuing process.

In the **finale**, rhythmic movement becomes increasingly important. Sustained lines, repeated figures, *pizzicato* and *arco* textures, sudden changes of speed and moments of unusual instrumental colour continually reshape the character of the music. At one point, the strings are transformed by the removal of *vibrato*, creating a strikingly different sonority before the earlier warmth of the ensemble gradually returns.

Throughout *Symphony No. 8*, the string orchestra is never treated as a fixed sound. The same five instrumental groups continually change their relationships and functions, moving between richness and transparency, lyricism and propulsion, collective sonority and individual lines. The symphony's unity lies not in the persistence of a single musical character, but in its continual transformation. Composed in Canach, Luxembourg, the music is dedicated to the composer’s youngest sister.

Discussion

Symphony No. 8 occupies an intriguing position in Dafydd Bullock's developing symphonic sequence. After the large-scale orchestral and psychological trajectory of *Symphony No. 7, Rhagrybudd - Premonition,* the return to the more restricted resources of the five-part string orchestra might initially appear to represent a contraction. In fact, the opposite is true. The limitation of instrumental forces becomes the basis for a renewed exploration of possibility. The question underlying the work is not how much music can be produced from a reduced ensemble, but how many different identities that ensemble can assume.

The symphony's three movements are clearly differentiated, yet each is concerned with a similar process of continual reorientation. A musical situation is established, only to be altered by changes of tempo, metre, texture or articulation. The listener is repeatedly invited to inhabit a particular sound-world, but is never permitted to remain there for long. The music changes direction, and what seemed stable proves to have contained the possibility of transformation all along.

The **first movement** establishes this principle immediately. There is no gradual emergence from silence, no tentative introduction of a solitary voice. The music begins already in motion, with the ensemble immediately engaged in the argument. Yet its purposefulness is complicated by continual shifts in character. Sustained sonorities coexist with more active movement, and the different instrumental layers often seem to inhabit distinct rhythmic or expressive spaces.

This gives the movement a particularly interesting sense of scale. Its structure is not dependent upon a conventional succession of themes, nor upon the familiar dramatic pattern of exposition, development and recapitulation. Instead, the music appears to travel through a sequence of territories. Each new region establishes its own relationship between movement and stillness, density and transparency, melody and rhythmic activity.

The changes of metre are especially significant in this process. They do not merely provide variety or rhythmic surprise. They alter the physical sensation of the music, changing its gait and its sense of balance. A passage that has appeared to move with assurance can suddenly seem unstable, or a lyrical idea can acquire a different expressive profile simply because the ground beneath it has shifted.

The result is a first movement in which continuity is achieved through change. The music remains recognisably part of a single argument precisely because it is continually capable of becoming something else. The listener's experience is therefore one of exploration rather than arrival.

The **second movement** introduces a different kind of contrast. Its opening establishes a more lyrical and singing character, suggesting for a time that the symphony may have reached a point of relative repose. Yet this stability proves temporary. The music accelerates dramatically, releasing a much more energetic and animated world before eventually returning towards its earlier tempo and character.

The significance of this structure lies in the relationship between interruption and recovery. The faster music does not simply function as a contrasting middle section inserted between two appearances of the slower material. Once the movement returns, the earlier world has been changed by what has intervened. The listener cannot hear it as though nothing had happened.

This is a recurring principle in Bullock's music: return is rarely simple repetition. Musical material may come back, but experience has altered its context. The earlier condition is recovered, yet it is no longer innocent of the journey that has taken place.

Within the string orchestra, this process is achieved without recourse to new instrumental colours. Instead, colour is generated from within the ensemble itself. A shift from *arco* to *pizzicato* can change the emotional temperature of a passage. A redistribution of material between registers can alter the apparent weight of the entire orchestra. A texture can suddenly become chamber-like, exposing individual lines, before expanding again into collective sonority.

The f**inale** brings these possibilities into particularly sharp focus. Rhythmic movement becomes increasingly important, but the movement never settles into a single type of propulsion. Sustained lines and repeated figures coexist; the music alternates between *arco* and *pizzicato*; tempos accelerate and withdraw. The string orchestra is treated not as a fixed body but as a field in which relationships are constantly being rearranged.

One of the most striking moments occurs when the ensemble is instructed to play without *vibrato*. The change is technically simple, but its expressive consequences are considerable. A familiar instrumental medium is suddenly heard from a different perspective. The warmth and flexibility normally associated with the string orchestra are temporarily suspended, and the sound acquires a more exposed, objective and almost disembodied quality.

What is important, however, is that this altered state does not become the new norm. It too is part of the symphony's larger pattern of transformation. The music eventually moves away from it, and the earlier possibilities of the ensemble return. The effect is rather like viewing the same landscape under changing light: nothing has disappeared entirely, but its character has been altered.

This concern with changing perspective gives *Symphony No. 8* an unusual formal vitality. Its three movements are not simply contrasted with one another; each movement contains within itself a succession of contrasting states. The work is therefore constructed from instability, but this instability is never arbitrary. There is a strong sense throughout that the music is exploring the consequences of its own material.

In this respect, the symphony develops ideas already present in the earlier string symphonies, but carries them into a new territory. *Symphony No. 6* had demonstrated that a string ensemble could sustain a large and ambitious symphonic structure without imitating the resources of the full orchestra. *Symphony No. 8* takes the next step. It is less concerned with proving the architectural capacity of the medium than with investigating its capacity for metamorphosis.

The result is a work in which orchestration and form become closely related. A change of sound is rarely merely decorative. When the music moves from sustained sonority to *pizzicato,* from warmth to *non-vibrato*, from dense ensemble writing to exposed lines, the alteration affects the course of the argument itself. The symphony develops not only through melodic or harmonic change, but through the changing physical nature of the sound.

This creates a curious paradox. *Symphony No. 8* employs a deliberately restricted instrumental palette, yet it may be one of the most concerned with variety of the works considered so far. Its richness does not come from the multiplication of colours but from the discovery that a single medium contains far more possibilities than might initially be apparent.

There is also a refreshing unpredictability about the work. After the emotional gravity and extended psychological trajectory of *Symphony No. 7, Symphony No. 8* seems unwilling to remain in any one emotional territory for too long. It turns, interrupts itself, accelerates, withdraws and begins again

from a different perspective. There is seriousness here, certainly, but also a sense of formal freedom: a willingness to allow the music to surprise both itself and the listener.

That quality may be one of the symphony's most attractive characteristics. It never gives the impression of following a predetermined route. Instead, its coherence arises from a persistent curiosity about what might happen next.

Symphony No. 8 therefore represents another significant stage in Bullock's exploration of the symphonic idea. It confirms that the string orchestra is not a substitute for larger orchestral resources, nor a limitation to be overcome. It is a medium with its own internal complexity, capable of continual renewal.

The symphony's subject, in a sense, is transformation itself. The same ensemble remains present throughout, but it is rarely heard in quite the same way for long. Movement becomes stillness; lyricism becomes energy; warmth becomes austerity; collective sonority dissolves into individual voices and gathers again.

The work does not seek unity by avoiding contradiction. It finds unity in the capacity of contradiction to become part of a larger musical life. After *Symphony No. 7*, that feels like a particularly important turn in the journey: not a retreat from intensity, but a rediscovery of movement, colour and possibility.

Symphony No. 9 Op. 187

Hochkönig

Programme Note

When Dafydd Bullock first encountered the *Hochkönig* massif in the Austrian Alps, he was overwhelmed by its physical presence. The vast formation seemed almost to possess its own resonance: immense, vertical and architectural, resembling in its scale and mass a gigantic organ. *Symphony No. 9* grew from that experience.

The work does not attempt to describe the mountain in a pictorial sense. Rather, its musical form gradually seeks an orchestral scale capable of responding to the experience of the landscape. The symphony is built around a progressive enlargement of its instrumental resources. It **begins** with a relatively restrained orchestra of woodwind, timpani and strings. In the **second movement** the orchestral palette expands with additional wind instruments and harp; the **third** introduces horns; The composer has commented on the third movement: *the music derives from one of the most violent experiences of my life, a sudden and vicious electrical storm which caught me by surprise on an exposed slope below a summit. The hailstones might well have killed me ….* Only in the **finale,** *Hochkönig*, does the full and massive brass force appear.

This gradual expansion gives the whole work the character of an ascent. The symphony begins in a spacious, almost elemental sound-world, from which melodic lines and instrumental colours slowly emerge. Subsequent movements introduce increasing movement, variety and weight, enlarging the musical landscape step by step.

By the final movement, the full brass orchestra has become available. Horns, trumpets, tenor horns, baritone, trombones and tubas transform the scale of the symphonic sound. Yet their arrival is not simply a gesture of grandeur. It represents the culmination of a process that has been unfolding throughout the work: the gradual discovery of a musical language large enough to answer the physical and imaginative force of the mountain itself.

The Austrian landscape inevitably brings with it echoes of the great symphonic tradition associated with that world. The broad sonorities, expansive harmonic space and monumental brass writing may recall Bruckner, while the wider symphonic imagination acknowledges other resonances from the Austro-German tradition. These echoes are neither accidental nor imitative. They are an act of homage: an acknowledgement that landscape, memory and musical inheritance can sometimes speak in the same voice.

Symphony No. 9 therefore does not seek to escape the symbolic weight of its number. Instead, it finds its own answer: a work which begins in restraint, progressively enlarges its world, and finally rises into the full resonance of *Hochkönig*.

Discussion

There are numbers in the history of music which composers inherit with a certain amount of baggage, and Nine is perhaps the most heavily laden of them all. Beethoven's Ninth transformed the possibilities of the symphony; Bruckner and Mahler gave the number an almost metaphysical significance; Schoenberg's phrase about the “curse of the Ninth” has ensured that even composers who might otherwise have ignored the matter have been made aware of it.

Dafydd Bullock's *Symphony No. 9* does not attempt to confront that history directly. There is no chorus, no philosophical text, no grand declaration about humanity, nature or transcendence. Yet the work does acknowledge the symbolic position of the Ninth in a more characteristically personal way. It does so through scale, through architecture and, above all, through a particular encounter with landscape.

The symphony takes its title from the *Hochkönig* massif in Austria. Bullock's first experience of seeing it was overwhelming. What struck him was not simply its beauty, but its physical and almost acoustic presence. The mountain seemed to possess a resonance of its own. Its enormous structure suggested the image of a gigantic organ: something vertical, monumental and apparently capable of producing a sound beyond ordinary human scale.

That experience provides the essential key to the symphony.

This is not landscape music in the conventional descriptive sense. The *Hochkönig* is not translated into musical scenery. There are no Alpine effects, no illustrative storms, no picturesque episodes intended to represent particular views. Instead, the experience of confronting the massif enters the architecture of the work itself. The symphony gradually constructs the means by which it can respond to what the composer saw.

Its most remarkable formal device is therefore its progressive orchestration. The **first movement** begins with notably restricted forces. The musical world emerges from strings, timpani and a small group of wind instruments. The effect is spacious and elemental. Rather than announcing the symphony with a fully formed orchestral gesture, the music seems to discover itself gradually. Lines appear, textures broaden and instrumental colours acquire significance precisely because they have not been present from the beginning.

The **second movement** enlarges the available world. Additional woodwind and harp introduce a greater flexibility of colour and a more mobile instrumental texture. The music begins to explore rather than simply establish. Individual voices emerge, groups interact and the symphony acquires a new sense of movement through its expanding landscape.

With the t**hird movement** comes another decisive enlargement: the arrival of the horns. Their appearance changes more than the colour of the orchestra. They alter its gravitational centre. The earlier world remains, but it now possesses a deeper resonance and a greater sense of distance. The symphony begins to acquire the weight required by its ultimate destination. Bullock writes; *the music derives from one of the most violent experiences of my life, a sudden and vicious electrical storm which caught me by surprise on an exposed slope below a summit. The hailstones might well have killed me ….*

Only in the **final movement,** *Hochkönig*, does the full brass force finally appear. The importance of this moment lies in the fact that the symphony has spent three movements preparing for it. The arrival of the expanded brass choir is not an arbitrary escalation, nor a conventional attempt to

provide the finale with greater volume and brilliance. It feels inevitable because the orchestral world has been progressively enlarged until the music finally possesses the means to speak on the scale demanded by the original experience.

The symphony, in this sense, ascends. But this ascent is not simply a matter of pitch, tempo or dynamic intensity. It is an expansion of resonance. Each movement adds another dimension to the available sound-world, until the final movement can occupy a space unimaginable at the beginning. The journey is from relative economy towards monumental sonority.

It is here that the work's relationship with the Austrian symphonic tradition becomes particularly interesting. The broad harmonic spaces, the weight and resonance of the brass, the gradual accumulation of orchestral mass and the sense of architectural ascent inevitably create echoes of Bruckner. At other moments, the coexistence of different musical worlds and the willingness to allow landscape, memory and symphonic form to interact may suggest a wider Mahlerian horizon.

There is no reason to evade these associations, and still less to apologise for them. The essential distinction is between pastiche and homage. Pastiche borrows a language because it wishes to reproduce an existing style. Homage acknowledges a tradition because something in the composer's own experience has led naturally towards it. Bullock's Austrian resonances belong to the second category. The mountains themselves provide the point of contact.

Bruckner and Mahler are part of the musical imagination of that landscape. To stand before such physical immensity and hear, somewhere in one's own musical response, echoes of their expansive symphonic worlds is neither an act of imitation nor an unconscious failure to find one's own voice. It is an acknowledgement of resonance: between landscape and music, between present experience and inherited sound.

Indeed, to suppress those associations in the name of stylistic independence would be a curious form of dishonesty. A composer hears what he hears. *The Hochkönig* does not become Brucknerian because the composer decides to imitate Bruckner. Rather, the physical experience of the mountain awakens musical possibilities that inevitably touch the same territory: breadth, resonance, monumental mass and a sense of sound extending beyond the individual human gesture.

The image of the mountain as a gigantic organ is especially revealing. The organ is itself an architectural instrument. It does not merely produce melody or harmony; it creates environments of resonance. Sound becomes space. In *Symphony No. 9*, the progressively expanding orchestra performs a comparable function. The work gradually builds its own instrument, movement by movement, until the final stage can answer the scale of the landscape that inspired it.

This also gives the Ninth Symphony a particularly elegant relationship with its famous number. Bullock does not attempt to compete with Beethoven's choral affirmation or with the philosophical and spiritual burdens accumulated by later Ninth Symphonies. His response is architectural rather than rhetorical.

The symphony begins with limited resources and enlarges its world until it reaches a summit. The symbolism is present, but it arises naturally from the conception of the work. Number Nine becomes an occasion for expansion rather than a problem to be solved.

What makes the work convincing is that the final grandeur has been earned. The brass does not arrive simply because this is the finale, nor because a Ninth Symphony is expected to end on a monumental scale. It arrives because the entire symphony has been preparing the space into which it can enter. The listener has travelled from the relative sparseness of the opening through

successive enlargements of colour, weight and resonance. By the time *Hochkönig* stands before us, the music is ready for it.

Symphony No. 9 therefore represents a particularly revealing moment in Bullock's symphonic development. It demonstrates an increasing willingness to allow external experience to enter the music without reducing that experience to programme. The mountain is not described. Its presence is absorbed into the work's proportions, its orchestral growth and its understanding of scale. As well, it marks the beginning of an increasingly explicit dialogue with an Austrian musical landscape. Where echoes of Bruckner and Mahler arise in the symphonies that follow, they should not be understood as stylistic disguises or as embarrassing resemblances requiring explanation. They are part of a continuing act of homage: the acknowledgement of composers whose music belongs to the imaginative world awakened by these mountains. The result is not imitation, but resonance.

Symphony No. 9 begins with a limited horizon and progressively enlarges it until, in the final movement, the orchestra seems finally capable of answering the mountain that inspired it. If the *Hochkönig* could hear the great Austrian symphonic tradition, then the composer standing before it is entitled to hear it too - and in this symphony, he answers in his own voice.

Symphony No. 10 Op. 190

Programme Note

Written in 2010 in Fachwen, Wales and Canach, Luxembourg, and dedicated to Ulrike Wiedenbach, *Symphony No. 10* is conceived as a single, continuous movement. Rather than dividing its argument into separate movements, the work unfolds as an extended musical journey in which contrasting episodes, changes of pace and shifts of orchestral colour emerge from one another without interrupting the larger continuity.

The symphony begins with the strings alone. Other instruments gradually enter the texture, enlarging and modifying the musical landscape as the work progresses. The orchestra is relatively modest in scale, but its resources are used with considerable flexibility. Woodwind, horn, trumpet, timpani and harp appear and disappear according to the changing requirements of the music, while the strings remain the principal thread running through the entire structure.

Throughout the work, musical ideas are continually renewed. Passages of sustained breadth give way to more animated and rhythmically active music; dense orchestral textures dissolve into individual instrumental lines; moments of accumulated energy are followed by withdrawal and renewed expansion. Yet these changes never divide the symphony into separate entities. The sense is always of one continuing journey.

In its later stages, the music gathers considerable momentum and eventually reaches a powerful orchestral climax. This, however, is not treated as a conventional final peroration. The accumulated energy gradually disperses, and the symphony moves towards an increasingly transparent conclusion in which the large orchestral structure with which the work has travelled so far is finally reduced once again to a more exposed and restrained sonority.

Symphony No. 10 is therefore a work concerned less with arrival than with continuation. Its unity lies in the ability of the music to change direction without losing its sense of purpose. New landscapes continually appear, but the journey never stops.

Discussion

There is something quietly significant about the position of *Symphony No. 10* within Dafydd Bullock's symphonic journey. The first nine symphonies had already explored a remarkable variety of possibilities. There had been works of concentrated intensity and expansive architecture, symphonies for string orchestra and for larger orchestral forces, works shaped by personal experience and others responding to landscape. *Symphony No. 9, Hochkönig*, had brought the preceding sequence to a point of extraordinary physical scale, progressively enlarging its orchestra until the music could answer the overwhelming presence of the Austrian mountain that inspired it.

Symphony No. 10 does not attempt to repeat that gesture. Instead, it turns away from monumental expansion towards a different question: what happens when a symphony is conceived not as a sequence of destinations, but as a single act of travelling?

The answer is a large continuous structure in which the music repeatedly changes its character without ever losing the sense of a common direction. *Symphony No. 10* has no conventional division into movements. Instead, its argument unfolds through a succession of contrasting regions, each creating a new musical environment while remaining connected to what has preceded it. The result is one of the most sustained examples so far of Bullock's instinct for allowing musical form to arise from behaviour rather than from an externally imposed design.

The symphony begins with the strings alone. This is immediately striking, not because the available orchestra is particularly large, but because the other instruments are deliberately withheld. Woodwind, horn, trumpet, timpani and harp exist as possibilities before they become audible realities. Their eventual appearances therefore matter structurally. The orchestra is not presented as a completed object at the beginning of the work. It gradually reveals itself.

There is a significant difference here from the progressive orchestration of *Symphony No. 9*. In *Hochkönig*, the instrumental forces themselves were enlarged from movement to movement, forming one of the central architectural principles of the entire work. *Symphony No. 10* already possesses its complete orchestra. What changes is not the available scale but the way in which that scale is inhabited.

The orchestra becomes, in effect, a reservoir of possibilities.

The strings remain central to the argument, establishing the continuity from which other instrumental colours emerge. Wind instruments appear as individual voices or as additions to an existing texture; the brass is used selectively rather than as a permanent source of weight; the harp provides moments of colour and transformation that alter the internal perspective of the orchestral sound.

This fluid use of instrumentation is closely connected with the work's formal conception. Because there are no separate movements, changes of orchestration often perform the function that a formal division might perform elsewhere. A thinning of texture can feel like the opening of a new chapter. The arrival of a new instrumental colour can alter the entire emotional climate. Yet the music does not stop and begin again. It simply finds itself somewhere else.

This creates one of the symphony's most compelling characteristics: renewal within continuity. Again and again, the musical world seems to reset itself. A passage reaches a point of completion, and instead of beginning a new movement the music simply changes its footing. The listener is carried into a new landscape without having formally crossed a boundary. The sectional

organisation of the score reflects this process. The successive rehearsal letters articulate the journey, but they do not represent self-contained episodes. Each is part of a much larger trajectory. The symphony behaves less like a sequence of rooms connected by corridors than like a journey through changing terrain.

That distinction matters. In a conventional multi-movement symphony, contrast can be achieved by separation. One movement ends; another begins. A new tempo, metre, emotional climate and structural principle can be introduced by the simple fact of starting again. *Symphony No. 10* has denied itself that possibility. It must create contrast without fragmentation.

The achievement of the work lies in the subtlety with which it manages this problem. Sustained passages give way to more active and rhythmically driven music. The orchestra alternates between collective sonority and exposed individual voices. Textures become increasingly dense, then suddenly transparent. Momentum gathers and disperses. Yet even at moments of radical change, there remains the sense that the music is remembering where it has come from.

The symphony therefore has an unusually organic sense of form. Its continuity is not based upon the constant presence of a single theme or rhythm, nor upon the rigid repetition of a formal pattern. It arises from the way one musical condition generates the possibility of another.

This is perhaps the most important development in the work. The question is no longer simply how musical material can be transformed. Earlier symphonies had already explored transformation in considerable depth. Here the larger concern is how an entire musical environment can change while the journey through it continues uninterrupted.

The central portions of the work are particularly revealing in this respect. At several points the orchestral texture becomes more spacious, allowing individual instruments and the harp to assume a greater prominence. These are not interruptions in the argument. They are moments at which the symphony seems to take a breath and look around. The image is not inappropriate, for *Symphony No. 10* possesses a distinct sense of changing perspective. The listener repeatedly arrives at a new vantage point. The surrounding landscape is different, yet the path remains recognisable.

From these broader regions, activity gathers again. Rhythmic movement becomes more insistent, the strings acquire increasing momentum and other orchestral voices begin to participate in the growing energy. But the symphony is never content simply to accumulate tension towards a single predetermined climax. It repeatedly expands and contracts, gathering energy only to redirect it, allowing a passage to reach apparent completion before discovering another possibility beyond it. The effect is of persistence rather than conquest.

This distinguishes *Symphony No. 10* very clearly from its predecessor. *Hochkönig* was an ascent. Its architecture moved towards an enlargement of scale, and the arrival of the great brass forces in the final movement represented the fulfilment of a process that had been unfolding from the beginning. *Symphony No. 10* does not ascend in this way - it continues.

That distinction may seem simple, but it represents an important shift in symphonic imagination. The work no longer requires a summit in order to justify its journey. Its meaning lies in the journey itself: in the capacity to continue moving through changing conditions, discovering new forms of energy and stillness without requiring each stage to be defined as a separate destination.

The later stages of the symphony bring this principle into particularly sharp focus. Activity becomes increasingly animated, and the different sections of the orchestra are redistributed with great flexibility. The music eventually gathers into a powerful collective statement, one of the most emphatic orchestral moments of the entire work.

But even here Bullock avoids the obvious conclusion. The climax is not simply the point at which the symphony stops. Instead, it becomes another stage in the journey. The accumulated energy begins to release itself, the orchestral texture thins and the enormous span of music gradually withdraws from the collective force it has achieved.

The ending is therefore particularly significant. After such an extensive journey, the symphony does not seek to conclude with a final act of assertion. It reduces itself. What had gradually expanded, transformed and gathered its forces now becomes increasingly exposed. The final sound has a sense of restraint that allows the whole journey to settle rather than simply to end.

There are, perhaps inevitably, moments in the symphony where the Austrian landscape that had become so explicit in *Hochkönig* seems still to cast a distant shadow. Some of the broader orchestral spaces and the willingness to allow the music to occupy extended spans of time may recall aspects of the Austro-German symphonic imagination. But *Symphony No. 10* does not depend upon those echoes. The mountain has receded and its scale has been internalised.

This may be the most revealing way to understand the relationship between the Ninth and Tenth Symphonies. In No. 9, the composer stood before an overwhelming landscape and gradually constructed the orchestral means to respond to it. In No. 10, that experience of scale has become part of the composer's musical instinct. The landscape is no longer simply outside the music - the journey itself has become the landscape.

For that reason, *Symphony No. 10* feels like a threshold. It closes the first group of ten symphonies, but it does so without any sense of retrospective summation or finality. On the contrary, it suggests a composer who has become increasingly confident in allowing large-scale form to emerge from the behaviour of the music itself.

There is no need for the symphony to demonstrate its credentials by following inherited patterns. It does not divide itself into movements because the music does not require those divisions. It does not build towards a single final summit because its journey is more interested in continuation than arrival. The work finds coherence not in formal obedience, but in a persistent sense of direction.

After ten symphonies, that is perhaps the most important achievement of all. The journey has accumulated landscapes, memories, experiments, losses, transformations and encounters. It has climbed mountains and returned to beginnings that could no longer be heard in the same way. By *Symphony No. 10*, however, the act of travelling has become sufficiently compelling in itself. The symphony no longer asks where it must go, it simply continues.

Symphony No. 11 Op. 191

Bergsymphonie

Programme Note

With its title *Bergsymphonie - "Mountain Symphony" - Symphony No. 11* belongs to a group of works in which landscape provides an important imaginative stimulus. Yet this is not a descriptive symphony in any literal sense. The music does not attempt to depict a particular climb or tell a specific story. Instead, the idea of the mountain seems to lie behind the work's contrasts of energy and stillness, movement and reflection, breadth and intimacy.

The **first movement** opens with a strong sense of purpose. Its flowing 6/8 rhythm creates an impression of sustained forward movement, while the orchestra gradually expands the musical landscape around it. There is physical energy here, but also a feeling of scale: the music seems continually to open out, as though each new stage of the journey reveals a further horizon.

The **second movement** provides the symphony's point of repose. Marked *cantabile,* it moves into a slower and more lyrical world in which the directness of melody becomes central. After the activity of the opening movement, the music seems to pause and contemplate its surroundings. The sense of landscape remains, but it has become more inward and reflective.

The **finale** restores momentum with renewed energy and rhythmic vitality. Its course, however, is far from straightforward. Episodes of activity are interrupted by moments of hesitation and change, and the music repeatedly alters its perspective. A later return to the flowing 6/8 rhythm recalls the world of the opening movement, but from a different vantage point.

The symphony ultimately avoids any conventional gesture of triumph. After its energetic final movement, the music gradually withdraws into a quiet conclusion. Rather than presenting the mountain as something conquered, *Bergsymphonie* leaves the listener with a sense of distance and stillness.

In this way, the work may be heard as a journey through contrasting states of experience: physical movement, lyrical contemplation and renewed energy, finally giving way to repose. The mountain remains throughout—not as a literal subject, but as an idea of scale, perspective and the changing relationship between human experience and the world around us.

The score was completed in Hinterthal and Luxembourg in 2011 and 2012.

Discussion

Symphony No. 11 marks an interesting moment in the sequence. After the continuous design of *Symphony No. 10*, with its sense of renewal within an uninterrupted musical journey, *Bergsymphonie* returns to a clearly articulated three-movement structure. The contrast is immediately significant. Where the previous symphony allowed its argument to evolve almost organically through a succession of transformations, No. 11 divides its experience into three distinct perspectives. The mountain remains the central imaginative presence, but the work approaches it through movement, song and energetic renewal.

The title *Bergsymphonie* might suggest a programme, or at least an attempt to translate a particular landscape directly into music. Yet the score resists anything so literal. There is no attempt to imitate natural sounds or to provide an illustrative sequence of ascent, storm, summit and descent. Instead, the mountain seems to function as a larger imaginative idea: something vast, physically demanding, capable of inspiring exhilaration and contemplation in equal measure. The symphony is therefore concerned less with scenery than with scale and perspective.

That distinction is important in understanding its relationship to the preceding works. The mountain had already entered this symphonic world explicitly, and the Austrian experience had become an increasingly important source of musical imagination. But in *Symphony No. 11* the idea has become sufficiently absorbed that it no longer requires a continuous landscape narrative. The composer can return to a more traditional symphonic division of movements without abandoning the underlying imaginative unity. The result is a work that is, in some respects, more classical in outline than *Symphony No. 10*, but not more conventional in spirit.

The **opening movement** establishes its character immediately. The 6/8 metre and dotted-quarter pulse of 70 create a broad but purposeful motion, while the lower strings provide an insistent rhythmic foundation from which the orchestral texture grows. The feeling is neither of leisurely observation nor of unrestrained excitement. There is weight in the rhythm, and consequently a sense of physical effort.

That physicality is one of the movement's most striking qualities. One is conscious of forward motion, but this is not the easy propulsion of a scherzo. The music seems to advance against resistance. In that respect, the title begins to acquire significance without the need for any literal musical depiction. The sense of the mountain is present in the character of the movement itself: in the persistence of motion, the alternation between upward-reaching gestures and heavier foundations, and in the impression that progress must continually be earned.

The orchestration contributes greatly to this effect. The symphony employs a relatively modest classical orchestra—woodwind, horns, trumpets, timpani and strings—but the scoring is used with considerable flexibility. The strings provide much of the fundamental continuity, while the winds and brass can emerge to alter the perspective rather than simply reinforce what is already happening. This gives the movement a particularly clear sense of depth.

What is especially effective is that the music does not remain in a single state of determined ascent. The movement develops by changing its relationship to its own material. Energies gather, subside and reappear in altered form. The listener is repeatedly given the impression of arriving somewhere, only to discover that the landscape extends beyond the immediate horizon.

This is perhaps the first major difference between *Bergsymphonie* and a straightforwardly descriptive mountain piece. The journey has no simple destination. The musical argument itself continually alters the meaning of forward movement.

By the later stages of the movement, the texture has acquired a greater sense of breadth. Eventually the music reaches a point where it seems almost to be preparing the completely different character of the second movement. At this point the first movement feel not merely like an independent opening statement, but like the first stage of a larger process. It is a movement of encounter: the physical confrontation with space, scale and distance.

The **second movement** is the symphony's emotional centre. Its opening could hardly offer a greater contrast. The tempo is slower, the metre changes to 3/4, and the marking mf *cantabile* immediately announces that melody, rather than propulsion, will now be the principal concern. The movement begins with the orchestra largely silent while the strings establish the new musical landscape.

The effect is almost that of arriving at a place where movement is no longer the central issue. After the first movement's insistence on progress, the symphony pauses to listen. The melodic writing here has a directness which is particularly important. Nothing is gained by treating this movement as a sentimental interlude. Its *cantabile* character does not represent an escape from the symphony's larger world; rather, it reveals another aspect of it. The same imaginative landscape that could appear vast and demanding in the first movement is now experienced as a place of stillness. The mountain, in other words, has ceased to be something outside the observer.

The music is reflective. The melodic lines unfold with considerable patience, supported by the lower strings, and the music repeatedly seems willing to remain with an idea rather than immediately develop or transform it. This creates a spaciousness that is quite different from the continuous metamorphosis of *Symphony No. 10*. One could perhaps describe the movement as the symphony's middle distance. The first movement establishes physical proximity: one is within the landscape, moving through it. The second creates perspective. The listener is allowed to stand back. Yet the movement is not static. Beneath the surface, there remains an awareness of direction. The melodic material grows, the texture changes, and the movement eventually acquires enough momentum to make the arrival of the finale feel inevitable rather than arbitrary.

The contrast between the first two movements therefore becomes structural as well as expressive. The opening movement asks: how does one move through this world? The second asks: what does this world mean once movement has ceased? That is a much more interesting relationship than a simple fast–slow contrast.

The **finale** answers by restoring energy—but not by simply repeating the experience of the first movement. The third movement begins with a much faster pulse and returns to 3/4. Its opening establishes an immediate sense of renewed activity. After the contemplative suspension of the slow movement, the symphony is once again in motion. The finale has greater volatility than the opening movement, but its energy is more restless, its rhythmic character more sharply articulated, and its development seems less concerned with sustained physical progress than with changing states of momentum. The music advances, interrupts itself, withdraws and begins again.

This quality becomes especially important later ion. In the bar before rehearsal T, the music comes to a general pause before a striking change back into 6/8 at a dotted-quarter pulse of 120. The significance of this moment is structural as well as expressive. The original rhythmic world is recalled, but not simply restored. The finale has travelled far enough for the return to acquire a different meaning. The 6/8 here feels less like a recapitulation than a reorientation.

That distinction, I think, is central to the whole symphony. *Bergsymphonie* repeatedly returns to recognisable kinds of musical experience—motion, song, rhythmic propulsion—but never quite in the same psychological position. The work does not progress in a straight line towards a single climax. Instead, it changes the listener's relationship to its material.

The orchestral writing in this later section is particularly revealing. The texture repeatedly shifts between concentrated string activity and more selective wind and brass interventions. At the start of the 6/8 return, the upper instruments are initially silent while the rhythmic life is carried by timpani and strings, before other orchestral colours gradually re-enter. The effect is almost one of rebuilding the musical landscape from its foundations.

As the movement proceeds, the orchestral fabric becomes increasingly animated. The viola's rapid repeated patterns, the answering gestures in the violins and the persistent lower-string pulse create a sense of accumulating activity, while winds and brass gradually assume a more substantial role. Once again, the symphony refuses the obvious gesture of arrival, and this is perhaps its most characteristic feature.

After the considerable activity of the finale, the music eventually withdraws. The last pages move into a much quieter sound world, with sustained notes, increasingly reduced gestures and a final sense of release rather than triumph. The concluding passage is marked predominantly p and mp, and the final page carries the inscription “Hinterthal and Luxembourg, 2010.”

That ending seems entirely right for this symphony. A mountain does not disappear because one has finished climbing it. Nor does a journey necessarily conclude with a victorious proclamation. The final withdrawal suggests something more reflective: the experience has taken place, but the landscape remains.

Seen as a whole, *Symphony No. 11* has a remarkably coherent three-part emotional trajectory. The first movement is concerned with movement through space. It is physical, persistent and exploratory. The second movement transforms that experience into contemplation. Time slows, melody becomes central, and the landscape is internalised. The finale restores energy and activity, but now with the experience of the earlier movements behind it. Its repeated changes of direction and its eventual withdrawal prevent the symphony from becoming a conventional progression towards victory.

Thus the three movements do not simply provide contrast. They represent three ways of experiencing the same imaginative world. This is why the title *Bergsymphonie* is so effective. It does not tell us what to hear in a literal sense. Instead, it provides a frame within which the symphony's contrasts become meaningful. Height and depth, exertion and repose, proximity and distance, activity and silence: these oppositions are built into the experience of the work.

There is also something significant about its position in the larger sequence. After *Symphony No. 10's* single-movement continuity, No. 11 might initially appear to represent a return to an earlier model. In fact, it does something rather different. The more traditional division into three movements gives the composer an opportunity to separate experiences that, in Symphony No. 10, might have flowed into one another. Here they are placed side by side and allowed to define one another through contrast.

The symphony is therefore not a retreat from the exploratory freedom of the preceding work. It is a consolidation. Indeed, *Bergsymphonie* seems to demonstrate an increasing confidence in allowing a symphony to be what it needs to be. There is no apparent obligation to make the work larger than its material demands, nor any anxiety about adopting a recognisable formal framework after the unusual continuity of No. 10. The three movements are given their own identities, but the

imaginative idea is sufficiently strong to bind them together. The result is a work that possesses both clarity and breadth.

If the preceding symphonies can be heard as part of an evolving relationship with landscape, memory and musical ancestry, *Symphony No. 11* represents a particularly satisfying moment of arrival—not an arrival at a destination, but at a way of writing. The Austrian phase is clearly still present. The geographical inscription at the end of the score confirms the connection between the work and the places in which it was composed. But the music does not depend upon quotation, imitation or stylistic pastiche. The landscape has become compositional material. That is the real achievement of *Bergsymphonie*. The mountain is no longer simply something the music describes. It has become a way in which the music thinks.

The result is a symphony of contrasts that nevertheless feels remarkably unified: a work in which physical energy gives way to song, song gives way to renewed movement, and movement finally dissolves into silence. The final quietness is not an anticlimax. It is the logical conclusion of the entire experience. Having travelled through the landscape, the symphony finally leaves us not at the summit celebrating, but standing still. Perhaps, after the considerable physical and emotional journey of the three movements, that is the most convincing possible ending.

Symphony No. 12 Op. 204

Hallstatt

Programme Note

Symphony No. 12 takes its inspiration from Hallstatt, the Austrian lakeside town whose extraordinary beauty conceals a history extending back through many centuries. The four movements approach the place from different perspectives: landscape, ancient history, cultural tradition and, finally, religious conflict and remembrance. Bullock writes: *I visited Hallstatt for the first time in 2011, and again in 2012. I was struck not only by the beautiful location, but also by the tangible atmosphere of past hardship and suffering.*

The **opening movement,** *Hallstättersee*, evokes the world of the lake itself. The music grows from a constantly changing orchestral texture in which strings and harps play an important part, creating a sense of movement, depth and shifting perspective. This is not descriptive music in any literal sense; rather, the lake becomes the symphony's first environment, a place of continual motion and changing light.

The **second movement,** *Keltensalz*, turns from the visible landscape towards the ancient history beneath it. Hallstatt's identity is inseparable from its long association with salt, and the music adopts a more inward and reflective character. The past is not reconstructed or illustrated. Instead, it seems to emerge gradually from the texture of the music, suggesting the accumulated memory of a place whose history reaches far beyond the present.

With *Unterbrochener Ländler*, the symphony enters the world of Austrian cultural tradition. A *Ländler* is suggested, but the dance is never allowed to establish an uncomplicated continuity. Its progress is repeatedly interrupted, diverted and transformed, this principally by the remembered sight of twenty tuba players crossing the lake in a large salt barge, playing a deep minor key chorale. The familiar becomes unstable, and tradition is heard not as something fixed and preserved, but as something remembered, disrupted and reshaped.

The **final movement,** *In Memoriam Ubi Caritas*, introduces the darkest historical dimension of the work. It refers to the religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Hallstatt and to the pogroms, persecution and forced expulsions that took place there. Against this history stands the title's reference to *Ubi Caritas*, with its invocation of love and charity. The contrast between ideal and reality gives the movement its particular emotional force.

The **finale** does not unfold as a simple elegy. Its changing tempos, agitation and moments of reflection create a far more troubled musical landscape in which conflict and remembrance coexist. The music gathers considerable energy before eventually returning to a slower and quieter world. This final withdrawal offers no easy resolution and does not attempt to erase the violence of the past. Instead, it becomes an act of remembrance.

Taken as a whole, *Hallstatt* reveals a place through successive layers of experience. The beauty of the lake, the ancient history of salt, the persistence of cultural tradition and the memory of religious persecution all belong to the same landscape. *Symphony No. 12* is therefore not simply a portrait of Hallstatt, but a meditation on the way in which places themselves contain history—sometimes visible, sometimes hidden, and sometimes impossible to forget. Written in Hallstatt, Vienna, Austria - Venice, Italy, - Hinterthal, Austria and Canach, Luxembourg, in 2012

Discussion

There is a temptation, when confronted with a symphony bearing the name of a particular place, to assume that its purpose is descriptive. One expects scenery translated into orchestral colour: the lake, the mountains, the picturesque architecture, perhaps some suggestion of local history. *Symphony No. 12, Hallstatt,* certainly begins with place, but it does not remain there. As the work unfolds, *Hallstatt* becomes something considerably more complex than a landscape. It becomes a repository of memory. The composer writes: *I visited Hallstatt for the first time in 2011, and again in 2012. I was struck not only by the beautiful location, but also by the tangible atmosphere of past hardship and suffering.*

That distinction is fundamental to the symphony. Its four movements do not present four independent impressions of the town. They uncover successive layers of what a place can contain. The first encounters the natural world; the second moves into ancient history; the third considers cultural tradition; and the finale confronts a history of religious conflict, persecution and forced displacement. By the end, the landscape with which the symphony began has acquired a very different depth.

The **opening movement**, *Hallstättersee*, establishes the visible world. Yet even here, the music is not simply picturesque. The lake is less an object to be observed than an environment within which the music exists. The orchestral texture is continually active, with strings and harps contributing to a sense of movement and changing perspective. There is an obvious temptation to hear water in such writing, but the more interesting impression is one of instability and depth. The surface is constantly changing, and the listener is made aware that what can be seen is not necessarily the whole of what is there. This becomes increasingly important as the symphony progresses.

Keltensalz immediately directs attention beneath the visible surface. Hallstatt's ancient association with salt gives the **second movement** a historical point of departure, but the music does not attempt an archaeological reconstruction. There is no claim to recreate an imagined Celtic past. Instead, the movement adopts a more restrained and inward manner, allowing musical ideas and colours to emerge gradually. The effect is one of historical depth rather than historical illustration.

This is an important distinction because *Symphony No. 12* is not interested in treating the past as a museum exhibit. History remains active. It is present within the place, whether or not it can be immediately seen. The ancient salt world is therefore not merely the subject of the second movement; it changes the way in which we hear the first. The beautiful surface of the lake now exists above a much deeper accumulation of human experience.

The **third movement,** *Unterbrochener Ländler*, brings another form of memory into the symphony: cultural memory. Here the title is particularly revealing. The work does not offer simply a *Ländler*, but an interrupted one. The familiar Austrian dance is present, yet it is repeatedly prevented from continuing undisturbed. Its identity is established only to be diverted, disrupted or transformed. In the worlds of the composer: *a typical Austrian idyll disrupted and later distorted by the sight of twenty tuba players crossing the lake in a large salt barge (I saw this!) and their deep, minor key chorale.*

The movement is therefore more than an Austrian interlude or a nod towards symphonic tradition. Its central idea is instability. A dance normally depends upon continuity. Its identity is established through pulse, repetition and the expectation that one gesture will lead naturally into another. Here, however, that continuity is repeatedly broken. Tradition survives, but not in an untouched form. It is remembered through interruption.

That idea becomes retrospectively significant when one reaches the finale. One need not impose a literal historical programme upon the *Ländler,* nor insist that every interruption represents a particular event. Nevertheless, within the architecture of the symphony, the movement establishes a principle which the finale later gives a much darker context: communal life and cultural continuity are not always secure.

The **final movement,** *In Memoriam Ubi Caritas*, changes the entire perspective of the work. The title refers to the religious conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Hallstatt, and to the pogroms, persecution and forced expulsions which took place there. The phrase *Ubi Caritas* therefore acquires a painful and deliberate significance. The invocation of love and charity stands in direct contrast to a history in which religious division produced violence and exclusion. This is not merely a spiritual conclusion to the symphony. It is an act of historical remembrance.

That knowledge changes the way the movement's musical behaviour is understood. The instability of tempo and metre, the alternation between agitation and reflection, elements of Duruflé's *Ubi Caritas* and the Lutheran '*Ein feste Burg*' - and above all the refusal to settle quickly into a single emotional state no longer suggest simply the broad contrasts of a large symphonic finale. The music appears to resist repose because the history to which it refers cannot be reduced to a simple elegy.

There is conflict within the movement itself. Energy accumulates, but it does not produce uncomplicated triumph. Moments of relative stillness are challenged by renewed activity. The music moves through different states rather than progressing directly towards a predetermined conclusion, eventually reaching a much faster level of energy before turning back towards the slower world with which the later stages of the movement conclude. The final quietness is therefore particularly important.

It would be easy for a symphony of this scale, employing such substantial orchestral resources, to conclude with a gesture of affirmation or conquest. *Symphony No. 12* does something more difficult. It withdraws. But this withdrawal should not be mistaken for consolation in any simple sense. The quieter ending does not resolve the religious conflict or undo the suffering that forms part of the movement's historical subject. Nor does it suggest that the past has somehow been overcome. Instead, the music creates a space in which remembrance can take place. The title *In Memoriam* is crucial here. The symphony cannot change what happened; it can only remember.

Seen in this light, the architecture of the entire work becomes particularly compelling. *Hallstättersee* begins with the external world, with landscape as it appears to the eye. *Keltensalz* uncovers the ancient human history beneath that landscape. *Unterbrochener Ländler* introduces a more recognisable cultural world, but demonstrates that tradition itself is vulnerable to interruption. Finally, *In Memoriam Ubi Caritas* confronts one of the most painful layers of the town's history.

The movement from landscape to history is therefore also a movement from observation towards moral awareness. This gives the title *Hallstatt* an unusual weight. By the end of the symphony, the name no longer refers simply to a beautiful Austrian town. It contains a whole accumulation of experience: natural beauty, ancient labour, cultural tradition, religious division, persecution and memory.

The symphony's large orchestral palette is essential to this conception, but its effectiveness lies not simply in mass. The score repeatedly moves between transparency and density, between individual colours and larger accumulations of sound. The two harps, expanded percussion and full orchestral forces enlarge the available world, but the music is often at its most telling when the perspective narrows and particular colours are allowed to emerge from the texture.

In this respect, *Symphony No. 12* demonstrates a growing assurance in the handling of symphonic scale. The orchestra is not merely a means of making the historical argument more emphatic. It becomes the space within which different kinds of memory can coexist.

There is, finally, something deeply characteristic about the symphony's refusal to separate beauty from history. Hallstatt may begin as a place of extraordinary natural beauty, but beauty is not allowed to become innocence. Beneath the lake lies ancient history; within the culture lies interruption; behind the sacred invocation of *Ubi Caritas* lies the memory of religious hatred and persecution. The symphony does not attempt to resolve these contradictions. That would be too easy, and perhaps dishonest. Instead, it allows them to remain. This is what gives *Hallstatt* its particular seriousness. It is not a symphony about a place as scenery. It is a symphony about the fact that places remember. The mountains, lake and streets may remain, apparently unchanged, while beneath them lie centuries of human experience. *Symphony No. 12* listens to those layers. In its final pages, after the conflicts, interruptions and accumulated energies of the work, it does not claim to have solved the past. It simply refuses to forget it.

Symphony No. 13 Op. 211

Attersee

Programme Note

Written in Hinterthal, Austria and Canach, Luxembourg in April 2013, *Symphony No. 13* takes its inspiration from the Austrian landscape surrounding the Attersee and a visit to Mahler's composing house. It is dedicated *In Memoriam Gustav Mahler.* The connection is more than geographical. Mahler's music has become inseparable from our imaginative sense of the Austrian landscape, and this symphony explores the meeting point between place, memory and musical inheritance. The work is cast in three movements, forming a broad journey from spacious lyricism through intense movement and transformation towards a final, more reflective perspective.

The **first movement** opens slowly and expansively. Melodic lines emerge within a broad orchestral landscape in which woodwind, horns, harp and strings play important roles. The music suggests space and distance, but it is not a static pastoral scene. The landscape is alive with movement, and the initial breadth gradually gives way to greater activity and contrast. By the end of the movement, the music returns to a more spacious and contemplative world, though the experience of the journey has already altered the perspective.

The **second movement** forms the great central span of the symphony. Beginning with immediate rhythmic energy, it develops into an extended orchestral journey in which momentum, colour and character are continually transformed. The movement does not follow a simple path from beginning to end. Instead, it passes through changing musical landscapes, allowing contrasting textures and instrumental colours to emerge from its underlying sense of propulsion. In its scale and willingness to encompass widely differing emotional and orchestral worlds, the movement forms the dramatic heart of the symphony.

The **final movement** begins in a quieter and more restrained atmosphere. After the immense energy of the central movement, this return to reflection has a particular expressive significance. The symphony seems to look once more towards the landscape with which it began, but from a changed perspective. What has been experienced cannot be set aside; the journey has altered the way in which the world is seen.

The dedication to Gustav Mahler is not an invitation to hear the work as imitation or pastiche. Rather, it acknowledges a musical inheritance. Mahler's presence may be felt in the symphony's willingness to embrace large spans of time, contrasting emotional states and expansive orchestral landscapes, while the music remains entirely within its own voice. *Attersee* is therefore both a response to a particular place and an act of musical remembrance. Landscape and memory become inseparable. The lake and its surroundings provide the physical setting, while the dedication places that setting within the larger history of Austrian symphonic music. The result is a work concerned not simply with what a landscape looks like, but with what it can contain: movement, distance, memory and the continuing presence of music from the past.

Discussion

Symphony No. 13 occupies an important position within this Austrian group of symphonies. If *No. 11, Bergsymphonie,* explores landscape as a source of physical and emotional experience, and *No. 12, Hallstatt*, discovers beneath a particular landscape the successive layers of history, culture and human conflict, then Attersee brings another dimension into the picture: musical memory. Its dedication, *In Memoriam Gustav Mahler,* makes that relationship explicit.

Yet the symphony is not a Mahler pastiche, nor does it appear to proceed through quotation or imitation. Its relationship with Mahler is more profound than that. Mahler becomes part of the imaginative landscape of the work. The lake, the Austrian environment and the symphonic inheritance associated with them become inseparable. The result is a work which seems to stand at a particularly interesting point in the sequence. It looks outward towards landscape, but also backwards towards musical history. The place is real, but it is already inhabited by memory.

The **opening movement** begins slowly and spaciously. The initial combination of clarinet, horns, harp and strings establishes a broad orchestral environment in which lyricism and movement coexist. There is a sense of landscape here, certainly, but it is not presented as a static panorama. The melodic material seems to arise from within an already active orchestral world. This is an important distinction. The music does not stand before the landscape and describe it. It appears to inhabit it.

The harp's flowing presence, the sustained horn writing and the prominence of the clarinet create a texture which is at once spacious and mobile. There is something recognisably Austrian in the broadness of the orchestral gesture, though the music remains firmly within its own language. What may recall Mahler is less any particular phrase than an attitude towards symphonic space: the willingness to allow lyrical material to exist within a large and constantly changing environment.

The movement gradually acquires greater energy and contrast. The initial breadth is not abandoned, but it is challenged by increasingly active writing and more sharply defined rhythmic impulses. The music moves through different states rather than following a single, uninterrupted emotional trajectory. This capacity to contain contrasting kinds of experience within one movement is perhaps one of the most convincing ways in which the Mahler dedication makes itself felt.

There is no attempt to make the movement sound as though it had been written by Mahler. Instead, the symphony seems to acknowledge the possibility that a landscape may contain contradictory emotional states: lyricism and unease, breadth and agitation, movement and suspension.

Towards its conclusion, the movement slows into a more spacious Meno mosso, allowing the earlier sense of breadth to return in an altered form. It is not a simple return to the opening. The preceding activity has changed the perspective. The movement appears to arrive at a state of contemplation rather than beginning there.

Then the **second movement** changes everything. It launches immediately into a world of propulsion and rhythmic energy, with the strings establishing an insistent current from which the horn emerges. After the spaciousness of the opening movement, the effect is almost startling. The symphony seems suddenly to abandon observation and enter motion. To describe this movement simply as a fast central movement would be misleading. Its extraordinary length gives it a quite different role within the architecture of the work. Occupying the great central span of the symphony, it becomes the principal dramatic territory through which the music must travel. This journey is one of the most remarkable aspects of No. 13. The music does not remain in a single condition of excitement. Its

fundamental energy is repeatedly transformed through changes of orchestration, texture and intensity. At times the orchestra acquires considerable force; elsewhere, the material opens out, allowing individual colours and smaller groups to emerge from the larger momentum.

Here is a movement which seems less like a conventional scherzo or finale than a symphonic world in its own right. The Mahler connection becomes especially suggestive. Mahler's influence is not heard in surface imitation, but perhaps in the willingness to allow duration itself to become expressive. The movement is permitted to wander, accumulate, change its footing and encompass contrasting episodes without the apparent anxiety to arrive quickly at a formal destination. It takes its time and that is one of the great strengths of the conception. The listener is not simply carried from one point to another. One travels through the movement. Its changing orchestral landscapes become part of the experience, and the very scale of the journey gives the later return to quieter material in the symphony a particular significance. The movement also seems to function as the point at which the entire orchestra is most fully released. The energy initially generated by the strings becomes increasingly collective as winds and brass participate more extensively, and the larger orchestral sonorities acquire a weight and brilliance which make the movement the dramatic centre of the work.

After such an immense central expanse, the opening of the **third movement** is therefore crucial. The music begins quietly in a reduced and more restrained orchestral texture, with the strings again playing a prominent role. The effect is not simply one of contrast. After the enormous journey of the preceding movement, quietness itself has acquired expressive meaning. This finale feels as though it returns to the landscape - but it is no longer the same landscape encountered at the beginning.

This is perhaps the central architectural idea of *Symphony No. 13*. The work begins in spaciousness, enters an enormous territory of movement and transformation, and eventually returns to a more reflective state. But the final reflection is informed by everything that has happened in between. The journey changes the place from which one looks. That gives the three-movement design considerable coherence. The first movement establishes a world; the second tests, expands and almost overwhelms it; the third allows the listener to encounter it again from a changed perspective.

There is something particularly satisfying about this architecture because it avoids the conventional expectation that the final movement must be larger, faster or more conclusive than everything which has preceded it. *Symphony No. 13* places its greatest physical and dramatic weight at its centre. The final movement has a different responsibility. It must provide perspective.

That seems entirely appropriate to a work subtitled *In Memoriam Gustav Mahler*. The dedication does not demand a grand funeral march or an explicitly elegiac conclusion. Instead, Mahler's presence may be understood as part of the symphony's larger consciousness of what Austrian symphonic music has made possible: enormous landscapes of sound, abrupt changes of emotional weather, extended duration and the coexistence of apparently incompatible musical worlds. In this sense, *Attersee* may be one of the most self-aware symphonies of the Austrian period.

Symphony No. 11 had responded to the experience of the mountains. *Symphony No. 12* had revealed the hidden histories beneath a particular landscape. *Symphony No. 13* brings the Austrian symphonic tradition itself into the landscape.

The lake is therefore never merely scenery. It becomes a place of encounter between the present and the past, between the composer's own musical voice and the memory of one of the great symphonic figures associated with the Austrian world.What is especially impressive is that the symphony does not allow this inheritance to overwhelm its own identity. Mahler is honoured, but not imitated. The three-movement architecture, the enormous central span and the broad orchestral thinking acknowledge a historical influence while remaining part of the composer's own continuing journey.

Indeed, the structure of the symphony can be heard almost as an act of artistic dialogue. The opening movement establishes a landscape and a voice. The immense central movement takes that voice through its greatest test of energy, duration and transformation. The final movement steps back, allowing the experience to be viewed in retrospect.

By the end of the Austrian sequence, landscape has acquired a remarkable range of meanings. It can represent physical movement, as in *Bergsymphonie*; it can conceal ancient history and human conflict, as in *Hallstatt*; and here, in *Attersee*, it becomes inseparable from the memory of music itself. This gives *Symphony No. 13* a particularly significant position. It feels in some respects like a summation of the ideas explored during this period, while its three-movement structure and immense central movement also push the symphonic form into a new scale of ambition.

Symphony No. 14 Op. 212

Venice

Programme Note

Symphony No. 14, Venice, is a musical response to one of Europe's most extraordinary cities. Rather than attempting a literal description of Venice or following a specific narrative, the symphony approaches the city through two contrasting aspects of its identity: the grandeur and mystery of *La Serenissima*, and the irrepressible energy and brilliance associated with its great musical tradition.

The **first movement,** *Serenissima*, takes its title from the historic name by which Venice has long been known: *La Serenissima*, "the Most Serene". The music evokes a city in which magnificence and melancholy, splendour and decay, stillness and movement coexist. Venice is never simply picturesque. Behind its familiar beauty lies an extraordinary sense of history, and the movement allows this atmosphere to emerge through broad orchestral sonorities, changing perspectives and moments of reflective calm.

There is a sense of the city itself gradually revealing its different faces. Grandeur is balanced by intimacy, while the music moves between more expansive orchestral statements and passages of greater transparency. The result is not a postcard portrait of Venice, but an imaginative encounter with its particular atmosphere: a city suspended between past and present, between the solidity of its architectural monuments and the constantly shifting reflections of water.

The **second movement,** *Vivaldissimo*, provides an immediate and vivid contrast. Here Venice is heard through the energy of its musical life and, in particular, through the exhilarating spirit associated with Antonio Vivaldi and the city that formed his musical world. The title is deliberately playful. This is not an attempt to imitate Vivaldi or to write pastiche, but rather to allow something of his vitality, rhythmic impulse and brilliance to enter a modern symphonic language.

The movement is characterised by greater energy and momentum, with lively orchestral writing and a sense of continuous invention. If *Serenissima* contemplates Venice, *Vivaldissimo* sets it in motion. The city becomes brighter, more animated and more theatrical, its musical past transformed into a fresh symphonic experience.

Together, the two movements present contrasting but complementary images of Venice. *Serenissima* looks towards its beauty, history and atmosphere; *Vivaldissimo* celebrates its energy, colour and musical imagination. The symphony does not seek to explain Venice or to encompass all that the city represents. Instead, it offers two distinct responses to a place whose visual and musical identities have inspired artists for centuries.

In *Symphony No. 14*, Venice becomes both landscape and sound: at once contemplative and exuberant, ancient and alive. It was composed in Canach, Luxembourg, in April 2013

Discussion

Symphony No. 14, Venice, represents a striking change of scene in the developing symphonic sequence. After the mountains, lakes and historical landscapes of the Austrian works, the journey suddenly turns southwards. Yet the significance of *Venice* lies in more than geography. The symphony also changes its musical attitude. Where the preceding works had increasingly explored the relationship between place, history and memory, *Symphony No. 14* approaches its subject with a new sense of freedom, colour and exuberance.

Its structure is deceptively simple. The symphony consists of only two movements, *Serenissima* and *Vivaldissimo*, but these two titles reveal two entirely different ways of approaching Venice. The first evokes the city itself: its atmosphere, spaces, reflections and elusive sense of movement. The second turns towards one of Venice's most celebrated musical associations and transforms that inheritance into an explosion of symphonic energy. One movement is concerned with Venice as a place; the other with Venice as a source of music.

Serenissima begins with considerable restraint. Despite the presence of a complete orchestra, the opening texture is selective and subdued, with muted strings and *pizzicato* creating a sound world that seems to emerge gradually rather than declare itself immediately. The choice is particularly effective because the title might easily have invited ceremonial grandeur. Instead, Venice appears almost indirectly.

There is an obvious temptation to hear the movement as musical water-painting, and certainly the gently active textures and shifting sonorities suggest an environment in which movement and reflection are inseparable. Yet the music is more interesting than a simple evocation of canals or lagoons. Its essential quality is one of changing perspective. Musical ideas emerge from the texture, acquire temporary prominence and then recede, while the gradual introduction of new instrumental colours continually alters the listener's sense of space.

The city is therefore experienced rather than described. The music has something of the quality of moving through Venice itself, where apparently enclosed spaces can suddenly open into unexpected vistas and where sound, light and activity continually change according to one's position. The orchestration contributes strongly to this impression. The various instrumental groups do not merely enter to increase the volume or weight of the music; they alter its perspective.

This gives *Serenissima* a curious combination of intimacy and breadth. It is not a miniature, despite its restraint, because the musical space continually seems larger than the immediate material occupying it. The movement establishes Venice as an atmosphere before it establishes it as an image.

The **second movement** immediately overturns this world. *Vivaldissimo* begins at a blazing tempo, with the strings launching themselves into an emphatic and highly energetic rhythmic texture. If the first movement approaches Venice almost cautiously, the second behaves as though all restraint has suddenly become unnecessary.

The title itself is wonderfully direct. Vivaldi is not hidden behind an abstract reference or discreet stylistic allusion. His name is placed at the centre of the movement and then exaggerated almost playfully. Yet the humour of *Vivaldissimo* should not obscure the seriousness of the compositional idea. The movement does not attempt to imitate Vivaldi or recreate the eighteenth century. Rather, it takes certain qualities associated with his music—perpetual motion, rhythmic propulsion, string

virtuosity and seemingly inexhaustible energy—and releases them into an entirely different symphonic context.

This is crucial to the success of the movement. It is not simply fast music maintained for its own sake. Speed itself becomes part of the symphonic argument. The opening establishes an extraordinary momentum, but the music must then find ways of sustaining, transforming and renewing that momentum over a substantial span. The strings remain central to this process, while the gradual participation of winds, brass and timpani enlarges the movement's scale and changes its weight.

What begins with an energy readily associated with virtuoso string writing gradually becomes something much larger. The historical reference is absorbed into the symphonic organism. By the later stages, one is no longer listening for traces of Vivaldi. The musical energy has become entirely its own.

There is an elegant structural relationship between the two movements. *Serenissima* begins with a full orchestra held in reserve, allowing the music to emerge from a relatively narrow and veiled sonority. *Vivaldissimo*, by contrast, begins with immediate assertion and spends the remainder of the symphony expanding, transforming and intensifying that initial impulse. The first movement creates space; the second fills it with movement.

The contrast also explains the unusual balance of the work. *Vivaldissimo* occupies the greater part of the symphony, beginning on page 19 and continuing to its conclusion. This is not merely a fast finale appended to a more substantial opening movement. It is the dominant experience of the work, a vast release of the energy which the first movement had deliberately withheld.

That release is one of the symphony's most attractive qualities. After the historical seriousness of *Hallstatt*, *Venice* does not attempt to find a still deeper layer of tragedy or memory. Instead, it changes direction completely. It permits delight.

Yet this is not a retreat into superficiality. The first movement retains a genuine sense of ambiguity and atmosphere, while the second is too extensively and energetically developed to be dismissed as a symphonic joke. The exuberance is not decorative; it is structural.

The relationship with the past is also notably different from that found in the Austrian works. There, musical and cultural history had often appeared as something embedded within a landscape, something remembered, interrupted or carrying the weight of human experience. In *Vivaldissimo*, history is approached with something much closer to affection and celebration. Vivaldi is not a distant ancestor to be examined. He is a living source of musical excitement.

That is perhaps the real pleasure of the movement. It treats musical influence not as a burden but as an invitation. The symphony's conclusion confirms this attitude. After its long accumulation of energy, *Vivaldissimo* does not return to the veiled world of *Serenissima* or dissolve into a nostalgic Venetian sunset. It ends with emphatic orchestral force, retaining the vitality that has driven the movement from its first pages. The city which had initially emerged from silence and muted colour has, by the end, become almost impossible to contain.

Symphony No. 14 therefore offers two complementary visions of Venice. One is a city of reflections, shifting spaces and elusive atmosphere. The other is a city of movement, virtuosity and musical invention. Neither vision attempts to provide a complete portrait, and the symphony is stronger for that. It does not catalogue Venice. It responds to two of its possibilities.

There is something very satisfying about the work's refusal to choose between contemplation and exuberance. It begins with mystery and ends with celebration. The first movement allows Venice to be sensed; the second allows it to move. Perhaps this is what makes the symphony such an effective departure from the preceding Austrian world. The journey does not merely arrive in another country. It discovers another state of mind. After the mountains and the historical shadows, the music suddenly finds itself beside the sea, surrounded by colour, water and centuries of musical invention.

Symphony No. 15 Op. 217

Jedermann - Everyman

Programme Note

Symphony No. 15, Jedermann – Everyman, composed in Hinterthal, Austria, in the summer of 2013, was inspired by the celebrated production of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann* performed as part of the Salzburg Festival in the square before Salzburg Cathedral. The setting itself is inseparable from the work's imaginative world: a drama concerning human life, wealth, judgement and mortality enacted in the open air beneath the monumental presence of the Cathedral.

The symphony does not attempt to retell the play scene by scene. Instead, it responds to the theatrical, spiritual and human atmosphere created by the production. The title retains the universal significance of *Everyman*, but the music grows from a particular experience of theatre and place, in which private human experience is set against an immense architectural and religious background.

The **opening movement** begins with immediate energy, as though the drama were already in progress. The strings set the musical world in motion before the orchestra gradually expands around them, creating a succession of contrasting dramatic states. Large gestures are balanced by moments of greater intimacy and exposure, suggesting the changing perspectives of a theatrical action in which the individual is repeatedly confronted by forces larger than himself.

The **second movement,** *Wiesenblasen mit Schatten,* turns towards a more reflective world. Its quieter and more restrained passages provide a contrast to the energy of the opening, but the sense of drama is never entirely absent. The music repeatedly moves between expansion and withdrawal, between the public scale of the symphony and a more inward perspective.

The **third movement,** *Scherzo für Anton Bruckner*, introduces another explicitly Austrian element. The homage to Bruckner belongs naturally within a symphony inspired by the cultural world of Salzburg and its Festival. Yet the movement is not an imitation. Rather, it acknowledges a great musical inheritance while retaining its own energetic and distinctive character.

The **finale,** *Ask not for whom the bell tolls ...*, brings the central theme of mortality into focus. The tubular bells form an important part of the movement's sound world, giving the music an inevitable symbolic resonance and evoking the chilling sound of the Cathedral bells during the production. Yet the finale is not a conventional funeral march. The music remains active and dramatic, moving between powerful orchestral statements and more reflective passages before gradually withdrawing towards a quiet conclusion.

In this context, the final stillness acquires particular significance. The drama inspired by *Jedermann* has brought the symphony face to face with mortality, but the conclusion does not seek either theatrical catastrophe or easy consolation. Instead, the music withdraws into reflection.

Jedermann – Everyman is therefore both a response to a particular Salzburg experience and a meditation on a universal human subject. Inspired by theatre performed before the Cathedral, the symphony transforms that public spectacle into an orchestral journey in which drama, tradition, mortality and reflection become inseparable.

Discussion

Symphony No. 15, Jedermann – Everyman, continues the Austrian sequence in a way that is both more theatrical and more universal than might initially appear. Its inspiration lies in a very particular experience: the celebrated production of Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Jedermann* performed during the Salzburg Festival in the square before Salzburg Cathedral. That setting is essential to understanding the symphony's imaginative world. The drama of human life and mortality is not presented in an enclosed theatre but in the open air, before an architectural and religious presence of overwhelming scale.

The individual stands before something larger than himself. This relationship between the human and the monumental seems to provide the symphony with one of its deepest impulses. *Jedermann* does not retell Hofmannsthal's drama, and it would be misleading to search the four movements for a sequence of operatic scenes translated into orchestral form. Instead, the symphony responds to the experience of the production: its public theatricality, its ritual quality, its confrontation with mortality and, above all, the extraordinary relationship between the individual drama unfolding before the audience and the vast Cathedral against which it is played.

The title *Everyman* nevertheless remains crucial. The theatrical inspiration is specific, but the subject reaches far beyond Salzburg. Hofmannsthal's protagonist is an individual, yet he also represents something universal. The confrontation with wealth, human attachment, judgement and death belongs to one figure on stage, but it is intended to speak for everyone. The symphony inherits that duality. It is rooted in a particular place and theatrical event, yet its subject is the human condition.

The **first movement** begins accordingly not with the gradual emergence of a landscape, as in several of the preceding Austrian symphonies, but with action already underway. The strings establish an immediate sense of energy and movement, while the wider orchestral forces are initially held in reserve. There is something inherently dramatic about this beginning. One has the impression not of arriving before a scene and watching it slowly take shape, but of entering a world in which events have already begun.

As the movement progresses, the dramatic field expands. The orchestra gradually assumes greater weight, and contrasting regions of activity and breadth emerge. The music does not need to correspond to particular moments in the play for the theatrical connection to remain powerful. Its behaviour itself is theatrical: forces enter, perspectives change, the scale expands and contracts, and moments of collective assertion are followed by more exposed passages.

This alternation between public and private scale is particularly appropriate to the inspiration behind the work. The production of *Jedermann* presents an intensely personal confrontation in an overwhelmingly public setting. The individual is placed literally before the Cathedral and before a large audience. The drama is private in subject but monumental in presentation.

Something comparable happens within the symphony. The full orchestra can create a vast collective force, but this is repeatedly balanced by moments of reduction and exposure. The music is capable of placing the individual gesture within a much larger world. That relationship becomes one of the central expressive principles of the work.

The **second movement** develops the inward side of this conception. Its slower and more restrained passages create spaces in which the symphony withdraws from the larger public scale established elsewhere. Yet this withdrawal is not simply repose in the conventional symphonic sense. After the

dramatic energy of the first movement, the quieter music carries with it a sense of reflection. The theatre has not disappeared. Rather, the perspective has changed.

One might think of the contrast between the great public spectacle of the Salzburg production and the intensely personal questions which lie beneath it. The story may be enacted before thousands of people and against the enormous façade of the Cathedral, but its essential subject remains the individual confronted by his own mortality.

The **third movement,** *Scherzo für Anton Bruckner*, introduces another dimension into this Salzburg-centred world. The reference to Bruckner might at first appear to lead the symphony away from *Jedermann*, but in fact it strengthens its cultural setting. The work is not simply inspired by a theatrical event; it belongs to an Austrian artistic landscape in which religious architecture, dramatic ritual and the great symphonic tradition coexist.

The movement's opening gestures, led by horn and trumpet against timpani, establish an emphatic and almost ceremonial character before the music develops into a more active orchestral world. The homage is clear, but the music does not attempt to become Bruckner. This is not an exercise in stylistic reconstruction. Bruckner enters the symphony as a presence within the larger Austrian cultural inheritance from which the work emerges.

There is a significant contrast here with *Symphony No. 13*, *Attersee*, *In Memoriam Gustav Mahler*. There, Mahler became inseparable from the landscape and from the idea of musical memory. In *Jedermann*, Bruckner is situated within a broader theatrical and cultural environment. His presence is not mourned or remembered from a distance; it is actively acknowledged as part of the world in which the symphony itself stands.

The **finale** brings the work towards its central confrontation. *Ask not for whom the bell tolls ...* is a title that immediately introduces mortality into the musical argument, and the tubular bells acquire an inevitable symbolic significance. Within the context of *Jedermann*, however, the bell means more than an abstract reminder of death. It belongs to the symphony's wider imaginative world of Salzburg Cathedral, theatrical ritual and the public enactment of an individual's final reckoning. The bells do not simply interrupt the music from outside - they are part of its world.

That is an important distinction. The finale does not become a funeral march, nor does it suspend life in order to contemplate death. The music remains active, dramatic and capable of considerable energy. Mortality enters not at the end of life but within life itself. The individual continues to act, struggle and move while the knowledge of death is already present. This gives the finale its particular dramatic tension. Large orchestral statements alternate with quieter and more exposed passages, and later in the movement the texture becomes increasingly selective before the larger orchestral forces are once again allowed to emerge. The movement seems continually to shift between public proclamation and private reflection.

That alternation can be heard as one of the symphony's most important responses to its theatrical inspiration. The Salzburg production of *Jedermann* transforms a personal story into a public ritual. The symphony similarly moves between the collective voice of the orchestra and the more intimate spaces which open within it. The conclusion is therefore particularly revealing. After a work of considerable orchestral scale, the final pages do not seek an overwhelming climax. Instead, the musical texture becomes progressively more selective and the symphony moves towards a quiet *pp* ending.

This withdrawal is more powerful because of everything which has preceded it. The bells have sounded, the dramatic world has been fully inhabited, the individual has stood within the vast space created by the symphony. The final response is neither triumph nor catastrophe. It is reflection.

The influence of the *Jedermann* production is therefore not confined to the symphony's title or philosophical subject. It appears to have shaped its entire sense of scale. Again and again, the work confronts the small with the large: individual gestures against the full orchestra, inward reflection against public drama, human experience against inherited tradition, and finally the living individual against the certainty of mortality.

The physical image behind the symphony remains extraordinarily powerful: a human drama enacted in the open air before Salzburg Cathedral. That image helps to explain why *Symphony No. 15* feels both personal and monumental. It does not abandon the concerns of the preceding Austrian works. Landscape, history, religious tradition and musical inheritance are all still present. But they are now gathered into a more explicitly human drama.

The Austrian journey had begun with the external world. Mountains and lakes provided landscapes into which music could enter. *Hallstatt* revealed history beneath beauty. *Attersee* brought Mahler and musical memory into the landscape. With *Jedermann*, the perspective shifts again. The landscape and the cultural inheritance remain, but the focus is now upon the human figure standing within them. *Symphony No. 15* takes the accumulated world of Austria—the mountains, the lakes, the religious and cultural history, Mahler, Bruckner and Salzburg itself—and places at its centre not a landscape but a person. Or, more precisely, every person.

The result is a symphony inspired by a specific theatrical event, but one whose final question belongs to everyone. Beneath the façade of the Cathedral, before the bells, before history and before death, *Jedermann* becomes what its title promises. Everyman.

Symphony No. 16 Op. 219

St. Bartholomä

Programme Note

Symphony No. 16, St. Bartholomä, written in Canach, Luxembourg, in April 2013 was inspired by the annual pilgrimage from Maria Alm through the high Alpine landscape to St. Bartholomä on the Königssee, a journey of some thirty-five kilometres. The composer undertook the pilgrimage three times, and the symphony follows and evokes the experience of that demanding journey: the ascent through darkness, the coming of dawn, the mountain Mass, the crossing of the *Steinerne Meer*, arrival at the Kärlingerhaus, and the final descent through the Saugasse towards the Königssee. The work is cast in four movements, whose titles trace the route of the pilgrimage.

The **first movement,** *Nachtaufstieg – Sonnenaufgang – Bergmesse*, begins with the sense of movement through darkness. The journey starts not with a panoramic view of the mountains but from within them: the steady physical rhythm of the ascent, the gradual awakening of the landscape and the slow emergence of daylight. The arrival of the sun transforms the experience of the journey, leading eventually towards the mountain Mass, where physical exertion and spiritual observance become part of the same experience.

Über das steinerne Meer forms the **second** stage of the journey. The vast rocky landscape of the *Steinerne Meer* presents a different kind of challenge: open, exposed and elemental. Here the human traveller is surrounded by a landscape whose scale seems to dwarf individual experience. Yet the journey continues. The movement evokes not only the physical character of the terrain but also the persistence required to cross it.

The **third movement,** *Kärlingerhaus*, brings a sudden change of atmosphere. After the solitude and exposure of the mountains comes the human world of the mountain refuge. The energy and vitality of the movement reflect arrival, companionship and the release of tension after the demands of the journey.

The **finale,** *Aufbruch – Saugasse – Königssee*, begins the final stage. Departure is followed by the descent through the Saugasse and the long movement towards the Königssee. The symphony thus returns to the idea with which it began: physical movement through landscape. But the direction has changed. The ascent through darkness has become a descent towards the lake, and the traveller who arrives is no longer the traveller who set out.

St. Bartholomä is therefore not simply an Alpine landscape symphony. It is a symphonic reimagining of a journey personally undertaken by the composer. The mountains are not observed from a distance or treated as picturesque scenery. They are experienced from within: through darkness and daylight, effort and endurance, solitude and companionship, landscape and spiritual ritual.

The result is a work in which the journey itself becomes the symphonic form.

Discussion

Symphony No. 16, St. Bartholomä, belongs unmistakably to the Austrian and Alpine world explored in several of the preceding symphonies, but it approaches that world from a markedly different direction. This is not music inspired by a landscape seen from a distance, nor even primarily by the historical or cultural associations of a particular place. Its origin lies in physical experience.

The symphony was inspired by the annual pilgrimage from Maria Alm through the mountains to St. Bartholomä on the Königssee, a journey of approximately thirty-five kilometres which the composer himself undertook three times. That experience provides the essential key to the work. The movement titles do not simply offer picturesque descriptions or imaginative associations. They trace the stages of a route which has actually been travelled: ascent through the night, sunrise, a mountain Mass, the crossing of the *Steinerne Meer*, arrival at the Kärlingerhaus, and finally the descent through the Saugasse towards the Königssee. The distinction is important. This is not a symphony which looks at the mountains - it walks through them.

That physical relationship with landscape gives the work a particular kind of authority. The mountains are experienced at human scale. They are encountered through darkness, effort, changing weather and light, fatigue, companionship and the continuing necessity of putting one foot in front of the other. The grandeur of the Alpine environment is present, certainly, but it is never detached from the human body moving through it.

The **opening movement,** *Nachtaufstieg – Sonnenaufgang – Bergmesse*, establishes this principle immediately. The journey begins in darkness, and the music begins accordingly from below rather than above. The opening suggests movement before spectacle: a steady tread, the physical rhythm of ascent, and the gradual awakening of a wider musical world.

This is an eloquent decision. An Alpine symphony might easily begin with the landscape itself, confronting the listener with breadth, height and orchestral magnificence. *St. Bartholomä* begins instead with the traveller. The mountains have to be reached.

That gives the opening movement a deeply experiential quality. The ascent is not merely represented; it becomes the process through which the symphony itself gradually comes into being. The wider orchestral landscape emerges slowly from the initial sense of movement, just as the physical world becomes increasingly visible during the ascent. Sunrise is therefore more than a conventional moment of pictorial illumination. It represents a change in consciousness. Darkness gives way to visibility, and the journey acquires a different relationship with the landscape through which it is passing.

The third element of the movement, the *Bergmesse*, adds another dimension. The pilgrimage is not simply an endurance walk through spectacular scenery. It has a spiritual and communal purpose. Physical effort, landscape and religious observance are brought together as parts of one continuous experience. That continuity seems central to the symphony's conception. Nothing is artificially separated. Walking leads to sunrise; sunrise leads onwards; the mountain Mass is not an interruption in the journey but one of its defining moments. The physical and the spiritual belong to the same landscape.

The **second movement,** *Über das steinerne Meer*, takes the experience into a different world. The *Steinerne Meer* is no longer the mountain as encountered through ascent and changing light. It is a vast environment of stone, openness and exposure. Here the human traveller is placed against a landscape whose scale can seem almost geological. Crucially, the symphony does not abandon the

idea of movement. It cannot. The landscape may appear immense and static, but the pilgrimage continues across it. The traveller remains present, and the physical act of crossing this difficult terrain becomes the movement's underlying human reality. This relationship between the moving individual and the apparently immovable landscape gives the symphony much of its distinctive character. The mountains are not transformed into abstract symbols of grandeur. They retain their physical reality. One has to cross them.

The **third movement,** *Kärlingerhaus*, provides the necessary human contrast. After darkness, ascent and exposure comes arrival. The mountain refuge introduces companionship, activity and the release of accumulated tension. The more energetic and extrovert character of the movement therefore has a natural place within the larger journey. It would be possible to describe this as the symphony's scherzo, but that would not entirely explain its function. Its significance lies less in formal contrast than in human experience. The solitary traveller has entered a social world. After the demands of the mountains comes warmth, activity and the presence of others. This is one of the most attractive aspects of the symphony's design. The landscape is never treated as though human beings do not belong within it. The pilgrimage moves between solitude and community, between the individual's private experience and the shared experience of the route.

The **finale,** *Aufbruch – Saugasse – Königssee*, resumes the journey and provides the symphony with a satisfying structural counterpart to the opening movement. Once again there is departure and physical movement, but the direction is now reversed. The traveller now descends and the knees begin to suffer. This reversal gives the entire work a strong sense of completion. The first movement moved upwards through darkness towards dawn and the mountain Mass. The finale begins with another departure and carries the journey downwards through the Saugasse towards the Königssee.

This is not simply a return to the point of departure because the journey has changed the traveller, physically and mentally. That is one of the oldest and most powerful ideas associated with pilgrimage, and it seems to lie naturally beneath the structure of this symphony. The purpose of a pilgrimage is not merely to arrive somewhere. The experience of travelling is itself transformative. The destination matters, but so does everything required to reach it. In *St. Bartholomä*, that process becomes the foundation of the symphonic architecture. The four movements do not merely depict four contrasting Alpine scenes. Together they trace a complete experience. The first movement establishes the act of beginning: the journey into darkness and towards illumination, the second confronts the traveller with the vastness and difficulty of the landscape itself, the third introduces rest, companionship and human community and the finale resumes the journey and leads towards completion.

What makes this structure particularly convincing is that it arises from lived experience rather than from an externally imposed programme. The composer had made the pilgrimage three times. The route was not imagined; the darkness, the distance, the changing landscape and the physical demands belonged to memory. This may explain why the symphony's relationship with landscape feels so different from simple musical description. The mountains are not an object. They are an environment within which the music moves. The human perspective remains central throughout.

This also gives *Symphony No. 16* an interesting place within the larger sequence of works inspired by Austria. Earlier symphonies had explored the mountain landscape as a source of symphonic imagination, particular places as repositories of history, and the Austrian musical tradition through figures such as Mahler and Bruckner. *Jedermann* had transformed the theatrical experience of Salzburg into a meditation on human mortality. *St. Bartholomä* returns now to the mountains, but with a new degree of personal involvement. The composer is no longer standing before the landscape, he is inside it. He walks through the darkness, watches the coming of dawn, attends the

mountain Mass, crosses the *Steinerne Meer*, reaches the refuge, sets out again and finally descends towards the Königssee.

The symphony therefore becomes something more than an Alpine portrait. It is an act of recollection. The music re-creates not only what was seen but what was experienced: the rhythm of walking, the alternation between solitude and companionship, the changing relationship between the human body and the vastness of the mountains, and the strange mixture of exhaustion, exhilaration and reflection which belongs to a long journey undertaken for a purpose. Perhaps that is the work's deepest achievement. Landscape becomes inseparable from memory, and memory becomes inseparable from movement.

The pilgrimage begins with a step into darkness and ends at the Königssee, but the symphony's real subject lies between those two points. It is the experience of travelling: of discovering that a journey of thirty-five kilometres can contain physical endurance, communal ritual, natural grandeur and private reflection without any of these things needing to be separated from the others. In that sense, *St. Bartholomä* may be one of the most genuinely autobiographical of the symphonies considered so far. Not because it tells the composer's life story, but because it grows directly from something he did, repeatedly, with his own body and experienced over many hours of walking. The journey becomes the symphony.

Symphony No. 17 Op. 222

Winter

Programme Note

Symphony No. 17, Winter, follows the unfolding of the winter season through four movements: *November*, *Advent*, *Christmas* and *January*. Rather than presenting winter as a single landscape or atmospheric condition, the symphony explores the changing experience of time as the year moves from the first darkening of November, through anticipation and celebration, towards the quieter world which follows.

The **opening movement,** *November*, begins in a restrained and inward-looking atmosphere. Much of the orchestral world is initially withheld, allowing the music to emerge gradually from a limited and subdued texture. There is a sense of transition: the year has begun to withdraw, the light is changing and the world seems to be preparing for the season to come.

Advent introduces a more active and purposeful character. The stillness of November gives way to movement and expectation. Advent is not presented simply as a period of solemn waiting, but as a time in which anticipation creates its own energy. The music acquires a greater sense of direction, as though something is approaching.

The **third movement,** *Christmas*, provides the emotional centre of the symphony, but in an unexpected way. It begins quietly and with considerable restraint. Rather than celebrating Christmas through outward splendour, the music turns towards stillness and reflection. After the anticipation of Advent, Christmas represents a moment in which time itself seems briefly to pause.

The **final movement,** *January*, takes the symphony beyond Christmas. The celebration has passed, and a more exposed and transparent world emerges, but with some interruptions - there is perhaps more than a hint of St. Petersburg at the close of the 19th century: ballroom dancing and manic sleigh rides - but they are not real …..

The movement does not seek a grand symphonic conclusion. Instead, it gradually withdraws, ending in a remarkably reduced and delicate texture and is central to the conception of the whole work. Christmas is not the destination. Winter continues.

Winter is therefore a symphony about the passing of time: anticipation, arrival and what remains afterwards. The four movements trace a progression from the threshold of the season towards its quieter aftermath, revealing winter not as a fixed image but as an experience which continually changes.

The symphony was completed in Canach, Luxembourg on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, 2013, and is dedicated to Lin and David Charlston.

Discussion

Symphony No. 17, Winter, occupies an interesting position in the sequence of symphonies which preceded it. After the large geographical and experiential journeys of *Jedermann* and *St. Bartholomä*, the scale of the imagination suddenly contracts. There is no mountain to climb, no pilgrimage route to follow and no great architectural or theatrical setting against which human experience is placed. Instead, the subject is time. More precisely, it is the experience of time during winter.

The four movements - *November*, *Advent*, *Christmas* and *January* - establish a clear chronological sequence, but the symphony does not simply move through a calendar. Each stage of the season possesses a different psychological character. The work is concerned not so much with what winter looks like as with how winter is experienced. That distinction gives the symphony its particular identity.

The **opening movement,** *November*, begins in a notably restricted musical world. Much of the orchestra is initially withheld, and the music emerges gradually from a subdued texture centred upon the strings. This immediately establishes November not as the full arrival of winter but as a threshold. Something is ending - something else is approaching. The music seems to inhabit that uncertain space between the two. November is neither the expansive conclusion of autumn nor yet the full stillness of winter. The world has begun to contract. Light is diminished, activity is reduced and the musical texture itself reflects this sense of withdrawal. What is particularly effective is the absence of overt pictorial description. The music does not need falling leaves, cold winds or any other conventional musical symbols of the season. Its sense of November arises from proportion and restraint. By withholding the full orchestral world, the symphony makes reduction itself expressive. Winter begins by taking something away.

The **second movement,** *Advent*, introduces a different relationship with time. The more active rhythmic character immediately distinguishes it from the reflective threshold of *November*. Advent is, after all, a period defined by expectation. It looks forward and the movement therefore possesses direction. This is an important part of the symphony's architecture. Had the work simply moved from November towards increasingly greater stillness, it might have become a sequence of variations upon a single atmospheric idea. Instead, *Advent* introduces energy. Winter is not merely a season of darkness and inactivity; it is also a period in which anticipation can create extraordinary momentum.

Time now has somewhere to go. The music seems to embody preparation, expectation and the sense of something gradually approaching. Yet what is approaching is not represented through an ever-increasing orchestral climax. The symphony takes a more subtle path.

When *Christmas* arrives, it does not explode, it becomes still. The **third movement** is perhaps the most revealing in the entire work. Marked by a remarkably slow tempo and beginning in an exceptionally restrained orchestral texture, it turns away from the obvious associations of Christmas as public celebration. The result is a Christmas viewed from within. After the anticipation of Advent, the moment itself brings a suspension of time. The forward movement stops. There is no longer anything to prepare for or await. Christmas has arrived, and the music allows itself simply to inhabit that arrival.

This gives the movement a reflective quality which is quite distinct from melancholy. Stillness here is not emptiness but fullness without activity. That distinction matters. The symphony understands that celebration does not always mean noise. Indeed, after a period of anticipation, the most

profound moment may be the one in which the movement of time appears temporarily suspended. The orchestral development which follows grows from this quiet beginning rather than contradicting it. The movement's centre of gravity remains inward. Christmas becomes a moment of contemplation as much as celebration.

Yet the symphony does something structurally unusual and, I think, particularly significant - I does not end there. A more conventional seasonal work might have treated Christmas as the culmination of the entire design. November would lead to Advent, Advent would lead to Christmas, and Christmas would provide the final arrival. But *Winter* continues. The **fourth movement,** *January*, is therefore not an epilogue. It is the destination towards which the symphony has been moving all along. Its opening creates another notably reduced and transparent world, with wind instruments and harp assuming particular importance while the strings are initially absent. The effect is quite different from the opening of *November*. Both movements involve restraint, but January has a different quality. If November is the beginning of withdrawal, then January is what remains after arrival. The celebration is over. Anticipation has disappeared. The world is quieter again, but it has passed through something. The listener is not returned to the point from which the symphony began. Indeed there are some interruptions - there is perhaps more than a hint of St. Petersburg at the close of the 19th century: ballroom dancing and manic sleigh rides - but they are not real …..

This distinction gives the final movement its remarkable sense of perspective. The transparency of the orchestration can suggest exposure or solitude, but it also suggests clarity. The accumulated activity of the earlier movements has been stripped away. What remains is essential. The ending takes this process of reduction even further. By the final page, the orchestral world has almost completely disappeared, leaving the harp to carry the final musical gesture at a very quiet dynamic. It is an ending of withdrawal rather than resolution in any conventional symphonic sense - and it is also entirely logical.

The work began by withholding much of its potential sonority, and it ends by withdrawing almost everything. Between those two points, however, the symphony has experienced anticipation, movement, arrival and celebration. The final quietness therefore has a different meaning from the opening restraint. The world has been through winter. This conception gives *Symphony No. 17* a remarkably coherent architecture. The four movements can be understood as four different forms of time. *November* is transitional time: the gradual movement away from one season before the next has fully arrived. *Advent* is anticipatory time: everything is directed towards an event which has not yet happened. *Christmas* is suspended time: the anticipated moment arrives, and movement temporarily ceases. *January* is time afterwards: the event has passed, and the world must continue.

The simplicity of this design is one of the symphony's strengths. There is no need for an elaborate external programme because the progression is already embedded in everyone's experience of the calendar. Yet the work avoids the danger of becoming merely descriptive because its real subject is not the calendar itself but the changing psychological relationship with time.

There is, perhaps, something quietly autobiographical in the circumstances of the work's composition as well. The score was completed in Luxembourg on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, 2013. A symphony whose central movement is *Christmas* was therefore brought to completion during the very period it explores. This does not turn the work into a diary. Its perspective remains broader. The personal act of composition and the universal experience of the season happen to intersect.

Within the larger symphonic journey, *Winter* represents a significant change of scale. The Austrian works had often explored landscape through physical movement: mountains climbed, lakes

approached, pilgrimages undertaken. Here the journey is inward and temporal. One simply waits - and in that waiting, the season changes.

That is perhaps the deepest idea in *Symphony No. 17*. Time is not represented as an abstract process measured by dates on a calendar. It is experienced through changes in energy, expectation, stillness and memory. November feels different from Advent not because the page of the calendar has turned, but because one's relationship with the future has changed. Christmas feels different again because anticipation has become presence. January arrives when that presence has become memory. The symphony follows that process with remarkable economy discovering the drama within waiting, the stillness within celebration and the strange clarity of the world after everything anticipated has finally happened.

Symphony No. 18 Op. 232

Programme Note

Symphony No. 18 is a four-movement work written in Canach, Luxembourg in 2014. It is without subtitle or programme. After several symphonies inspired by particular places, experiences and seasonal ideas, the work turns towards a more abstract conception in which musical movement, contrast, rhythm and orchestral colour provide the essential drama.

The **first movement** begins with immediate energy. Its vigorous rhythmic impulse establishes a strong sense of propulsion, but this momentum is repeatedly interrupted by moments of suspension. The movement therefore develops through a tension between continuity and disruption, pressing forward while continually questioning its own direction.

The **second movemen**t offers a marked contrast. The musical space becomes broader and more reflective, with sustained lines and more exposed textures replacing the physical drive of the opening. Rather than simply providing repose, however, the movement creates a different kind of tension: one based upon distance, silence and the relationship between isolated gestures.

The **third movement** restores speed and rhythmic volatility. Abrupt interruptions become an important part of its character, giving the music a playful but unpredictable quality. Energy is repeatedly released, interrupted and renewed, creating a movement in which silence itself becomes part of the rhythmic argument.

The **finale** begins unexpectedly, with a more spacious and restrained sound world. Gradually, however, the music gathers momentum and orchestral weight. Earlier elements of rhythmic vitality and interruption are absorbed into a broader symphonic perspective, leading eventually towards a decisive conclusion.

Symphony No. 18 demonstrates that a symphonic journey does not require an external programme. Its drama arises from the behaviour of the music itself: movement and stillness, momentum and interruption, intimacy and orchestral power.

The result is a work in which the symphony becomes its own landscape.

Discussion

There is something almost liberating about *Symphony No. 18*. After a sequence of works whose identities are immediately established by places, landscapes, historical memories, pilgrimage and the changing seasons, this symphony arrives without explanation. There is no subtitle and no programme. The four movements are simply allowed to exist as movements of a symphony. That apparent simplicity, however, places a different responsibility upon the music. Without an external narrative, the sense of progression must arise from rhythm, contrast, texture, momentum and the changing relationship between the various forces of the orchestra. The symphony must create its own drama.

In that sense, No. 18 represents a return to the symphony as an autonomous musical argument. This does not imply emotional detachment or abstraction in any pejorative sense. On the contrary, the absence of an external programme allows the expressive character of the work to emerge directly from the behaviour of the music itself. There is no landscape to imagine, no historical event to reconstruct and no narrative whose stages must be followed. Instead, the listener is invited to experience the changing pressures of the music: its propulsion and hesitation, its expansion into space, its sudden interruptions and its eventual gathering towards a decisive conclusion.

The **first movement** begins with an immediate sense of propulsion. There is no gradual preparation and no tentative exploration of material. The music is already moving, driven by a vigorous rhythmic character which establishes confidence and forward momentum almost at once. Yet this momentum is not simply maintained from beginning to end. The movement repeatedly encounters moments of interruption and suspension. Energy is checked, space suddenly appears, and the listener becomes aware that the direction of the music can never be entirely taken for granted.

This tension between movement and interruption seems to be one of the symphony's most important underlying ideas. The music repeatedly establishes an impulse towards continuation, only to interrupt or challenge that impulse. Momentum therefore becomes something which must be regained. The pauses are not merely decorative gaps between phrases; they affect the nature of the musical argument itself. The movement presses forward, hesitates, regroups and then discovers a new energy.

The **second movement** opens an entirely different kind of musical space. The vigorous physicality of the first gives way to more sustained writing and exposed textures, creating a greater sense of distance between musical events. It would be easy to describe this simply as the symphony's slow movement, but that would not entirely explain its function. The music is concerned not only with repose but with what happens when musical gestures are allowed to stand apart from one another. Space itself becomes expressive.

Ideas emerge into a more open environment, where sustained lines coexist with more active gestures and where silence acquires a greater presence. If the first movement creates pressure through its need to maintain momentum, the second releases that pressure and allows the music to breathe. The contrast is therefore structural as well as emotional. The symphony moves from propulsion to reflection, but without abandoning the underlying sense that movement and stillness remain in continual dialogue.

The **third movement** restores energy with considerable force, although the nature of that energy is now more volatile and unpredictable. Its fast 6/8 writing and abrupt interruptions give the music a restless, mercurial quality. The sudden ***G.P.*** silences are particularly important, because they transform silence from a simple absence of sound into an active part of the rhythmic design.

There is something scherzo-like about the movement, although the traditional label does not quite capture its particular character. Its playfulness lies not simply in speed or lightness, but in unpredictability. Rhythms are set in motion, interrupted and then thrown forward again. Rapid activity and sudden emptiness become complementary elements, and the listener gradually learns that discontinuity is part of the movement's expressive language. An idea which appeared earlier in the symphony as resistance to momentum is now transformed into a source of energy in its own right.

The **finale** takes this process into yet another environment. Instead of responding to the volatility of the third movement with an immediate orchestral proclamation, it begins in a surprisingly spacious and restrained manner. Sustained wind phrases emerge with considerable space around them, while the full weight of the strings is initially withheld. After the accumulated tensions of the preceding movements, this opening creates the impression that the symphony has temporarily stepped back and opened a broader perspective.

Gradually, however, the movement begins to gather force. Activity increases, the strings become more prominent and the orchestral world expands. What initially seems exploratory begins to reveal itself as preparation. The finale does not simply accumulate sound in order to produce a conventional grand conclusion. Rather, it absorbs the contrasting energies of the earlier movements and places them within a broader symphonic framework. The rhythmic vitality of the first movement and the volatility of the third are no longer isolated phenomena but become part of a larger process of expansion.

By the final pages, the symphony achieves a decisive sense of arrival. The significance of that conclusion lies partly in the journey required to reach it. The music has not travelled directly towards affirmation. It has repeatedly interrupted itself, allowed energy to dissolve into space and transformed silence into an active musical element. Even the finale begins not with certainty but with restraint. The eventual arrival therefore feels earned rather than simply imposed.

The four movements are united not by an external programme but by a recurring concern with the nature of musical movement itself. The first establishes propulsion and resistance; the second opens a more reflective and spacious world; the third transforms interruption into rhythmic energy; and the finale gradually gathers these contrasting experiences into a broader and ultimately decisive conclusion. These are not hidden programme titles, but rather descriptions of what the music does. The journey of *Symphony No. 18* is entirely musical.

That, perhaps, is precisely why the work provides such a satisfying moment of release within the larger sequence of symphonies. After mountains, lakes, religious history, theatrical ritual, pilgrimage and winter, there is suddenly no need to ask what the music represents. Nothing stands between the listener and the sound. The work does not ask to be decoded but simply to be heard: to follow its changes of pace and weight, to experience its interruptions, to feel the tension between movement and stillness and to recognise the gradual expansion through which the final movement reaches its conclusion.

In this sense, *Symphony No. 18* is not a retreat from the imaginative richness of the preceding works but a return to another kind of imagination. Freed from the responsibility of describing anything beyond itself, the music creates its own world through rhythm, silence, contrast and orchestral energy. The absence of a subtitle becomes almost an aesthetic statement. After a succession of symphonies in which the external world has provided so much of the initial impulse, No. 18 returns to the inexhaustible possibilities of the symphonic form itself.

It is, in the end, a work which trusts the music to speak without explanation. Four movements, an orchestra and an argument created entirely from sound. After the richly descriptive journeys which precede it, that does indeed feel like something of a relief.

Symphony No. 19 Op. 234

Selbhorn

Programme Note

Symphony No. 19, Selbhorn, is inspired by the imposing Alpine mountain which dominates the landscape around Hinterthal. Unlike a conventional musical landscape, however, the symphony does not attempt simply to portray the mountain through picturesque orchestral effects or to follow a narrative journey across it. Its central compositional idea is more direct: the physical contours of the Selbhorn itself provide an important basis for the musical design. It was written in Hinterthal, Austria, in 2014.

The symphony is cast as a **single continuous movement.** As the imagined line of the mountain rises and falls, the tessitura of the music responds to its changing profile. The work therefore begins in the depths of the orchestra and develops through changing registers and orchestral perspectives, tracing a large-scale musical contour related to the physical shape of the mountain.

The opening establishes a powerful foundation in the lowest instrumental registers. From this low-lying musical landscape, the orchestra gradually expands and rises. As the work develops, increasing activity, changes of texture and expanding orchestral colour accompany the movement through different levels of musical space. The ascent is not merely a matter of increasing volume or intensity; it is expressed through the actual placement of the music within the orchestra's register.

This principle gives the symphony its distinctive sense of continuity. Rather than dividing the musical argument into separate movements, the work unfolds as one extended span in which changing energy, orchestral colour and tessitura form part of a single trajectory. Moments of greater activity and weight are balanced by more transparent and reflective passages, while the changing register continually alters the listener's perspective.

The mountain is therefore present not simply as an image or atmosphere but as an underlying structural force. Its shape becomes musical.

In *Selbhorn*, landscape is translated into sound at a fundamental level. The listener does not merely contemplate the mountain through the music; the music itself follows its contours, rising and falling across the orchestral landscape before eventually receding into a quieter conclusion.

Discussion

Symphony No. 19, *Selbhorn*, returns to the Austrian mountains, but it does so with a compositional idea rather different from anything encountered in the preceding symphonies. The mountain is not the setting for a journey, as it was in *St. Bartholomä*, nor is it treated primarily as a source of atmosphere or pictorial inspiration. Instead, the physical form of the Selbhorn enters directly into the musical conception. The contours of the mountain shape the tessitura of the symphony, so that its rises and falls are reflected in the large-scale movement of the music through different registers.

This is the essential key to the work. Once understood, it changes the relationship between landscape and music. The Selbhorn is not merely something which the orchestra observes or describes. Its physical profile becomes an organising principle. The mountain's shape is translated into musical space.

The symphony is cast in a **single continuous movement,** and that formal decision seems inseparable from its central idea. A mountain presents itself as a single physical form, however complex its slopes, ridges and changes of contour may be. To divide the musical response into separate movements might have interrupted the very line which the work seeks to follow. Instead, *Selbhorn* unfolds as one extended span in which the music continually changes its level, density, energy and orchestral perspective.

The opening is therefore especially significant. The work begins in the depths of the orchestra, establishing its first musical position in the lowest registers. This is more than an effective orchestral gesture. Within the larger conception, it establishes a point of departure at the foot of the mountain. From this low foundation the musical tessitura can begin its gradual transformation.

As the orchestral world expands, the changing register becomes part of the symphonic argument itself. Instruments enter, the texture broadens and the music begins to occupy different levels of orchestral space. The listener experiences not simply an increase in intensity but a change of altitude. The mountain's profile is not reproduced through a literal melodic diagram; rather, its shape influences the larger disposition of the music.

That distinction is important. A simple musical representation of a mountain might trace an ascending line, reach a climax and then descend again. *Selbhorn* employs a subtler and more symphonic principle. The physical contour of the landscape provides a framework within which the music can develop freely. The orchestra rises and falls through its registers, but these changes are integrated into a much larger argument involving rhythm, texture, colour and orchestral weight.

As the work progresses, passages of increasing activity and momentum emerge. Rapid figures pass through the orchestra, and the initially monumental conception of the opening begins to acquire greater movement. Yet the earlier low-register foundation is not forgotten. The later activity grows out of the same musical landscape. The mountain does not disappear when the music becomes animated; rather, its contours continue to provide the underlying frame within which the symphonic energy develops.

This gives the work an interesting relationship with scale. A mountain can appear almost abstract when seen from a distance: a great shape against the sky, defined by its outline. Once one is within the landscape, however, that simplicity disappears. The traveller encounters changing surfaces, gradients, spaces and perspectives. *Selbhorn* seems to accommodate both experiences. Its large-scale design responds to the overall contour of the mountain, while its internal development allows for considerable variety of texture and energy.

The more transparent passages in the central part of the work are therefore particularly important. After substantial orchestral activity, the texture opens and individual instrumental lines become more exposed. Within the broader topographical conception, such moments can be understood not as interruptions to the symphonic line but as changes in the landscape through which that line passes. The music alters its perspective without abandoning its fundamental continuity.

This is one of the strengths of the single-movement structure. The symphony can move from density to transparency, from low to high tessitura, from weight to movement and back again without the artificial boundary of a new movement. Each transformation becomes part of the same larger contour.

The later stages of the symphony bring renewed intensity and orchestral energy. Yet even here the work does not simply convert its topographical idea into a conventional symphonic ascent towards a final summit. The mountain's profile is more complex than a single climb, and the musical argument follows a correspondingly varied path. Rising and falling, expansion and reduction, momentum and stillness all contribute to the overall shape.

The final pages provide an especially revealing conclusion. After the preceding activity, the texture becomes increasingly reduced, with solo woodwind and lighter instrumental groupings emerging from the orchestral mass. The work ultimately withdraws into a much quieter and more restrained conclusion. This is entirely consistent with the symphony's underlying conception. The music has followed a landscape rather than pursued an inevitable dramatic victory. There is no need for the mountain to be conquered or for the orchestra to claim possession of it in a final blaze of sound. The music simply follows its course.

That may be the most striking aspect of *Selbhorn*. The work transforms a visual fact into a musical principle without becoming a literal piece of pictorial description. The physical outline of the mountain is not merely illustrated but absorbed into the organisation of the symphony itself. The changing tessitura becomes a kind of musical topography.

There is, of course, a long tradition of composers finding inspiration in landscape, but the conception here is more structurally intimate than simple scenic representation. The Selbhorn provides not only the title and imaginative impulse but a hidden line which shapes the disposition of the music. One might almost think of the mountain's profile as an enormous, silent melodic gesture whose rises and falls are redistributed across the orchestra. The continuous form is crucial to this effect. The listener is not invited to stop and consider separate views of the mountain. Instead, the music unfolds as one long encounter with a single shape, continually changing in detail but never losing its underlying identity.

In this respect, *Selbhorn* occupies a particularly interesting place among the Austrian symphonies. *St. Bartholomä* transformed a pilgrimage personally undertaken by the composer into a symphonic journey. There, the human traveller provided the organising principle: the music moved through a sequence of experiences. In *Selbhorn*, the human journey recedes. The organising principle is no longer the traveller's route but the mountain's own physical form. The landscape itself takes command.

Yet the result is not impersonal. On the contrary, the act of translating a familiar mountain into musical form suggests a deeply personal way of seeing. The composer does not merely stand before the Selbhorn and respond to its grandeur. He studies its shape and asks how that shape might become sound. The answer is not a literal imitation but a transformation. Height becomes tessitura. Contour becomes trajectory. Physical form becomes musical architecture. That is what gives *Symphony No. 19* its distinctive identity. The mountain is not simply the subject of the work. The mountain helps to compose it.

Symphony No. 20 Op. 235

The Miracle of Zattere

Programme Note

Symphony No. 20, The Miracle of Zattere, was inspired by an encounter on the Zattere in Venice. There, the composer heard an elderly and evidently unhappy street violinist playing fragments of familiar musical themes. His playing was poor, the phrases incomplete and the musical thoughts repeatedly abandoned before they could properly develop.

The encounter remained in the composer's imagination. On the journey home, he began to wonder what might happen if, for one brief moment, the true spirit of music were to release the player from the technical limitations which prevented him from expressing what he perhaps wished to say. What if the broken fragments could suddenly become melody? What if the scraping, mechanical gestures could give way, just once, to genuine lyricism?

This is the starting point of *The Miracle of Zattere*.

The solo violin represents the unknown street musician. At the opening of the symphony it plays alone, producing broken and awkward fragments, beginning musical thoughts which it seems unable to complete. The orchestra enters as a different musical reality: a world in which the fragments can expand, sing and develop into something beyond the apparent abilities of the solitary player.

Gradually, the symphony opens into music of increasing breadth and lyricism. The solo violin is no longer confined entirely to its hesitant and mechanical gestures but becomes part of a much larger musical world. For a time, the impossible seems to happen. The musician is allowed to soar, and the symphony discovers a deeply lyrical and expressive voice.

The miracle, however, cannot last.

Later, the characteristic broken solo violin returns, bringing the listener back to the reality from which the symphony began. The anonymous musician remains on the Zattere, and his limitations have not been permanently overcome. Yet, for one extraordinary moment, the music has allowed us to hear not simply what he could play, but what he might have expressed had his imagination been equal to his hands - and his hands equal to his imagination.

The Miracle of Zattere is therefore not a story of transformation in any permanent or conventional sense. It is the story of a momentary act of musical grace. The street violinist remains anonymous and unchanged, but for a brief time the spirit of music allows him to become, in the imagination, the musician he perhaps always wished to be.

The symphony was composed in Hinterthal, Austria in the summer of 2014 and is dedicated to the unknown street violinist who inspired it.

Discussion

Among the symphonies considered so far, *Symphony No. 20, The Miracle of Zattere*, is one of the most immediately human. Its inspiration does not arise from a mountain, a pilgrimage, a historical event or the changing seasons. It begins with an encounter: a composer hears an anonymous man playing the violin badly on a square in Venice.

That simple situation might easily have become comic. A composer could have exaggerated the poor playing, turned the awkwardness of the violinist into caricature and made the contrast between incompetence and orchestral brilliance into a joke. But that is not what happens here. The symphony approaches its unknown protagonist with a mixture of observation, imagination and, ultimately, compassion.

The solo violin is not simply a solo instrument in the conventional concertante sense. It represents a person. From the opening, marked *sempre senza vib.*, it is deliberately separated from the normal expectation of the virtuoso soloist. The violin does not arrive with a grand melody or an impressive display of technical brilliance. Instead, it produces hesitant fragments and incomplete gestures, as though continually attempting to begin a musical thought without ever quite finding the means to carry it through.

This immediately establishes one of the most important distinctions in the work. The street violinist is not presented as someone who has nothing to say. On the contrary, the fragments suggest the opposite. There is always the possibility of melody, the suggestion of something recognisable or expressive, but the musical thought repeatedly breaks down. The tragedy, if one may use that word, lies not in the absence of imagination but in the inability to realise it.

The symphony therefore begins with limitation. What follows is the miracle.

As the orchestra enters, a larger musical world begins to emerge. At the point where the score moves into a more explicitly *cantabile* character, the contrast becomes particularly significant. The music discovers the capacity to sing. Where the solo violin had struggled with fragments, the symphonic world allows those impulses to expand into longer lines, richer colours and a more sustained expressive continuity.

This is where the conception of the work becomes especially moving. The orchestra is not simply accompanying the soloist or rescuing him from his inadequacy. It represents, rather, the musical potential which surrounds and enlarges him. One might think of it as the music that he hears inwardly but cannot fully produce.

The symphony therefore operates simultaneously on two levels. There is the external reality of the street violinist: the awkward bowing, the incomplete phrases and the mechanical repetition. Alongside it is an imagined reality in which those limitations are temporarily suspended. The orchestra gives form to the possibility contained within the fragments.

For a brief time, the violinist is allowed to become lyrical.

And it is here that the symphony reveals one of its most distinctive qualities. The central transformation is not primarily about virtuosity. The miracle is not that an incompetent violinist suddenly acquires the technical ability to play Paganini. That would reduce the whole conception to a rather simple fairy tale. What matters is that the music becomes capable of sustained expression. The violin is allowed to sing.

This gives the symphony's lyrical passages their particular emotional force. They are not merely episodes of beautiful music inserted into an otherwise eccentric programme. They represent the fulfilment of a possibility which has been present from the beginning. Every broken fragment in the opening carries with it the implication of a phrase that might, under different circumstances, have continued. The lyrical music allows the listener to hear that continuation.

The awkward beginning is therefore essential. Without it, the lyricism would simply be lyricism. Because of what has preceded it, however, it becomes an act of release.

The symphony's more expansive writing develops this idea further. The individual street musician is placed within an orchestral world capable of colours, sonorities and emotional dimensions far beyond the possibilities of his original playing. Yet the solo violin remains at the centre of the conception. The symphonic expansion is always connected, directly or indirectly, with the figure whose musical struggle provided the initial impulse.

At a later stage, the music becomes more intimate again. From Section H, the slower impulse and the delicate surrounding texture create a moment of particular tenderness, with the solo violin placed within a much quieter environment. Here the distinction between the real violinist and the imagined musician seems at its smallest. The music no longer needs orchestral grandeur to demonstrate what is possible. The violin is simply allowed space in which to express itself.

This, perhaps, is the emotional heart of the symphony. The miracle is not spectacular. It is lyrical.

For a while, the mechanical scraping and broken phrases are forgotten. The instrument becomes capable of the song which seemed impossible at the beginning. The listener is allowed to believe, if only temporarily, that music itself has overcome the limitations of the player.

But the symphony is too honest to allow this transformation to become permanent.

The return of the original violinistic character later in the work is therefore crucial. At bar 372, the *sempre senza vibrato* marking reappears, bringing the listener back towards the musical identity with which the symphony began. After everything that has happened, the effect is profoundly affecting. The lyrical world has not been imagined away; we have heard it, inhabited it and experienced its emotional force. Yet the unknown violinist must eventually return to the reality from which he came. In a sense, we return with him to the Zattere.

The remarkable thing is that this return does not invalidate the miracle. Nothing has changed permanently, but something has nevertheless happened. The listener has heard the gap between the man's physical limitations and his imagined musical potential. The symphony has given form to a possibility which, in the real world, remained unrealised.

That is why the work avoids sentimentality. The composer does not pretend to have rescued the violinist. He does not emerge at the end as a transformed virtuoso, and there is no triumphant assertion that art can magically solve the circumstances of human life. The anonymous musician remains anonymous. His playing remains imperfect, but for one moment he has been heard differently.

This is the real generosity of the symphony. It asks us to look beyond the surface of what we encounter. A bad violinist can be dismissed. His playing can be irritating or even ridiculous. Yet behind the scraping bow and the abandoned phrases there may still be a longing for music, a desire to sing through the instrument and an imagination that the fingers cannot adequately serve.

The Miracle of Zattere takes that possibility seriously. In doing so, it also raises an intriguing question about the nature of musical expression itself. Where does the music truly reside? Is it entirely contained within the sounds a performer is capable of producing, or can the listener imagine beyond those sounds? Can an incomplete phrase suggest a complete one? Can a failed attempt at lyricism make us more conscious of the lyricism that might have been?

The symphony answers these questions not theoretically but musically. It takes the fragments and allows them, for a time, to blossom. The orchestra becomes the space in which the unfulfilled possibility of the violinist can become real.

That is perhaps why the work's lyrical writing carries such particular conviction. It is not lyricism for decorative purposes. It is the fulfilment of the symphony's central dramatic idea. The music sings because, at the beginning, someone could not.

The final outcome is inevitably more ambiguous. The dream cannot continue indefinitely, and the music eventually returns towards the world of the solitary street musician. The symphony does not close with the conventional triumph of the concerto hero or with the permanent redemption of its protagonist. Instead, it allows the miracle to remain what miracles so often are: temporary, inexplicable and impossible to retain.

The unknown violinist inspired the work, but he remains unknown. We do not learn his name, his history or what happened to him afterwards. In a way, that anonymity is essential. He becomes a figure encountered only briefly and then left behind, yet the encounter generates an entire symphony.

Perhaps that is the deepest achievement of *The Miracle of Zattere*. It transforms an apparently insignificant moment into an act of imaginative generosity. A sad man plays badly in a Venetian square. A composer hears him and does not simply hear failure. He imagines what might lie beyond it. For one brief period, the violin is released from its limitations. It sings, soars and enters a world of lyricism that the real player could never have reached. Then the dream passes, and the mechanical scraping returns. But we have heard the other possibility. The miracle does not change the violinist's life - it changes the way we hear him.

Symphony No. 21 Op. 249

Mosel

Programme Note

With *Symphony No. 21*, written in Canach, Luxembourg in June 2015, Dafydd Bullock turns towards the landscape and cultural history of the Mosel valley. Yet this is not a conventional pastoral or geographical symphony. The river itself is only one element within a much larger sense of place, in which landscape, history, wine, politics and the continuing presence of the past become inseparable.

The three movements offer three contrasting perspectives.

The **first,** *Mosel und Römer,* brings together the river and the Roman world which has left such a profound mark upon the region. The music grows from an initially restrained string texture, gradually expanding as individual instrumental voices emerge and the full orchestra begins to assert itself. There is a sense of movement, perhaps the relentless marching rhythm of the Roman soldiers, through a landscape in which the natural world and the accumulated presence of history coexist.

The **second movement**, *Mosel, Wein und Marx,* takes a more exuberant and unpredictable course. Its title brings together three very different aspects of the region: the river, the vineyards and the intellectual and political legacy associated with Trier, birthplace of Karl Marx. The music responds with energy, contrast and rapid changes of character, moving between large orchestral gestures and more individual instrumental episodes. The happily flowing wine festivals are interrupted by the first line of the Internationale - an evocation of Karl Marx

The **final movement**, *Die Glocken von Trier*, turns towards one of the most characteristic sounds of the city. From an initially spacious and transparent texture, the music gradually gathers momentum and weight. Individual instrumental voices emerge before the orchestra is drawn together in an increasingly powerful conclusion, enhanced by elements of the Mosel Hymn.

Throughout the symphony, the Mosel is not simply portrayed as scenery. It becomes the setting for a dialogue between different layers of time: the Roman past, the cultural traditions of the region, the world of ideas and the sounds that continue to define the landscape today. In *Mosel*, place becomes something more than geography. It becomes history, memory and identity.

Discussion

There is a significant difference between writing music about a place one has visited and writing music that arises from a place which has become part of one's life. By the time Dafydd Bullock came to *Symphony No. 21*, landscape had already become one of the most important forces in his symphonic imagination. Mountains, lakes, Austrian villages and cities had all provided impulses for earlier works. Yet *Mosel* occupies a rather different position. The Mosel valley is not an exotic destination or the object of a temporary encounter. It is part of the composer's lived environment. For that reason, *Symphony No. 21* represents an important development in the continuing evolution of the geographical symphony: place here becomes not merely an image or an experience, but a form of belonging.

The title itself is revealing. Bullock does not simply call the work *The Mosel* and then proceed to offer three descriptive scenes. Each movement enlarges the idea of place by attaching the river to something else: *Mosel und Römer, Mosel, Wein und Marx,* and *Die Glocken von Trier*. The landscape is therefore immediately placed within a network of associations. Nature exists beside history; wine and local culture beside political and intellectual history; and finally the physical landscape is transformed into sound through the bells of Trier. The symphony is not concerned with a single subject. It is concerned with the accumulation of identities which make a place what it is.

The **first movement,** *Mosel und Römer*, establishes this principle with considerable restraint. Rather than beginning with an immediate orchestral proclamation, the music grows from a more limited texture. The strings provide the initial world, active and mobile but not yet monumental, and the gradual emergence of other instrumental voices creates a sense of expansion. The full orchestra is something that has to be reached.

This is an important structural idea. The movement does not present its landscape in completed form. It allows the landscape to acquire depth. Individual instruments emerge from the orchestral texture as though separate voices were becoming audible within a larger environment. The effect is not simply picturesque. One becomes aware of different scales of perception: the detail of individual lines, the motion of the strings, the appearance of solo voices and, eventually, the larger architectural presence of the orchestra.

The Roman association deepens this sense of accumulated time. The Mosel valley cannot be separated from the extraordinary persistence of its Roman past. In Trier and throughout the region, antiquity is not remote history but a visible and continuing presence. Yet Bullock does not attempt to recreate Rome in a conventional historical manner. There is no attempt at archaeological reconstruction and no musical masquerade. The Romans are present because the past itself is present within the landscape. The movement therefore seems to concern itself less with historical representation than with historical depth.

This is a characteristic feature of Bullock's geographical imagination. The landscape is rarely empty. Even when a work is concerned primarily with mountains or water, the music tends to discover human memory within the physical world. In *Mosel und Römer*, the river and the Roman inheritance become inseparable elements of a single identity. Nature has been inhabited, transformed and remembered.

The **second movement,** *Mosel, Wein und Marx*, makes a deliberately dramatic contrast. Even the title has a slightly mischievous quality. It brings together three things which belong to entirely different categories: a river, a drink and a political philosopher. Yet all three are connected by the region. The result is not a neat historical argument but a portrait of cultural abundance.

The movement's music reflects this variety. Its character is more volatile, more energetic and less inclined towards the gradual accumulation of the first movement. Large gestures are interrupted by more individual passages; orchestral mass gives way to solo voices and returns again. The result is a movement of continual change, almost as though the symphony is exploring its subject from several directions at once.

Wine is an obvious element of Mosel identity, but Bullock's treatment avoids reducing the movement to rustic celebration. The music has energy and exuberance, certainly, but it is too restless to become merely festive. The vineyards belong to a larger cultural landscape. They represent tradition, labour, sociability and the particular character of the valley, but they are placed beside the altogether different presence of Marx with an evocation of the *Internationale*.

That juxtaposition is perhaps the movement's most intriguing idea. Karl Marx, born in Trier, represents not local colour but intellectual history on an international scale. Suddenly the Mosel is connected not only with Roman civilisation and regional culture, but with one of the great political and philosophical movements of modern history. The symphony's sense of place therefore expands considerably. This apparently tranquil river valley becomes a point at which very different worlds intersect.

The music seems to respond to this by refusing stability. The movement is not content to establish a single atmosphere and remain within it. Instead, it moves through sharply contrasted episodes and changing perspectives. There is something almost theatrical about this succession of ideas, though not in the sense of narrative illustration. Rather, the movement seems to acknowledge that a place can contain contradictions. History does not arrive in orderly layers. Civilisations, ideas, traditions and everyday life coexist, often without any obvious logic except that they happen to occupy the same geographical space.

This gives the central movement an important position within the symphony. If the first movement establishes depth, the second establishes complexity. The Mosel is not merely ancient; it is also modern. It is not merely beautiful; it is inhabited by ideas. It contains celebration and argument, continuity and disruption.

The **final movement**, *Die Glocken von Trier*, provides the work with its most immediately recognisable central image. Bells are among the most powerful expressions of place because they cannot easily be separated from the communities in which they sound. A church bell is not simply a musical object. It marks time, defines distance and carries across streets, valleys and generations. One may hear it without seeing its source, and yet immediately know where one is.

Bullock begins this movement with a striking degree of openness. Individual instrumental voices emerge within a relatively transparent texture, creating an atmosphere quite different from the volatility of the preceding movement. The music initially seems to listen rather than proclaim. The bells are therefore not introduced as a spectacular orchestral effect. Their presence is absorbed into the movement's entire sense of space.

Gradually, however, the musical world expands. The orchestra becomes increasingly active, the individual voices are drawn into a larger collective movement and the music gathers weight and momentum. What is particularly effective is that the final movement does not simply repeat the procedure of the first. There, the orchestra gradually emerged from a more restricted beginning as the movement acquired historical and architectural scale. Here, the expansion has a different significance. The separate sounds and voices of the opening are progressively united.

The bells of Trier thus become more than an acoustic image. They provide the symphony with a metaphor for collective identity. Different histories and different experiences have occupied the

preceding movements: Romans, vineyards, Marx, the river itself. In the final movement these diverse associations seem to find a common space. The bells are heard across the city, indifferent to the divisions between past and present. Their sound belongs simultaneously to history and to the present moment.

It is significant that the symphony ends not in withdrawal but in affirmation. Throughout the earlier symphonic journey there have been many endings in which resolution is achieved through reduction: music fading, disappearing or finding a final sense of repose. *Mosel* chooses a different conclusion. The orchestra gathers itself for a decisive collective statement. After the varied perspectives of the three movements, the symphony ends by asserting its presence.

This conclusion also gives the work an interesting position within Bullock's continuing development. The geographical symphony had already travelled a considerable distance. In the earliest examples, landscape could provide a subject or an image. Later, particularly during the Austrian sequence, landscape became increasingly inseparable from musical structure itself. Mountains, lakes and places were no longer simply described; they became environments within which the music could move, grow and discover itself.

With *Symphony No. 21*, something changes again. The landscape has become personal in a different sense. *Mosel* is not necessarily autobiographical through direct narrative, but it is autobiographical through proximity. The composer is writing from within a world rather than looking towards it.

That distinction is important. Travel often encourages selection. One encounters a place, recognises what seems characteristic and transforms that experience into art. Home is more complicated. It contains the ordinary as well as the remarkable, the familiar alongside the historic, the everyday beside the monumental. One does not choose the elements of one's environment as one might choose the subjects of a travel diary. They simply coexist.

This may explain the curious richness of the symphony's titles. *Mosel und Römer*, *Mosel, Wein und Marx*, *Die Glocken von Trier*: these are not carefully balanced poetic inventions. They have something almost conversational about them, as though the composer were simply naming the things which, together, make this particular part of Europe what it is. A river. The Romans. Wine. Marx. Bells.

And yet from this apparently casual collection emerges a surprisingly comprehensive idea of place.

The Mosel is ancient, but it is also contemporary. It is a landscape of natural beauty, but also of agriculture and work. It carries the physical remains of Rome while passing through cities associated with some of the most consequential ideas of modern political history. Its identity can be seen in vineyards and architecture, but it can also be heard in the bells which continue to sound across Trier.

Bullock's achievement in *Symphony No. 21* is to avoid reducing this abundance to a postcard. The music does not tell us what the Mosel looks like. It allows us to experience the richness of associations which surround it.

In this sense, *Mosel* is a symphony about cultural memory. Every place contains multiple versions of itself. The physical landscape remains, but successive generations attach new meanings to it. Romans travelled beside the river; vineyards altered its slopes; cities grew; ideas emerged; bells continued to mark the hours. None of these layers replaces the others, they accumulate and the structure of the symphony reflects precisely this process. The first movement discovers historical depth. The second introduces cultural and intellectual complexity. The third transforms the

accumulated identity of the region into sound and brings the various strands towards collective affirmation.

Viewed within the larger sequence of symphonies, No. 21 therefore feels both like a continuation and a new beginning. It continues Bullock's fascination with landscape, history and geographical identity, but the relationship has become more intimate. The composer is no longer simply travelling through landscapes and allowing them to stimulate musical responses. He has arrived at a place which has become part of his own world. That may be the deepest significance of *Mosel*. It represents the moment at which the geographical symphony becomes a symphony of belonging.

The river itself flows continuously through the work, sometimes explicitly through its associations, sometimes simply as the geographical thread connecting everything else. Around it gather the remnants of Rome, the vineyards, the ideas of Marx and the bells of Trier. Nature, history, culture and memory are not separated into independent categories. They form a single landscape of identity. By the end, the symphony has travelled a considerable distance without ever really leaving home.

Symphony No. 22 Op. 250

Waldjahreszeiten

Programme Note

In *Symphony No. 22, Waldjahreszeiten - Forest Seasons* - Dafydd Bullock returns to one of the central concerns of his symphonic music: the relationship between landscape and human experience. The work follows the changing life of the forest through the cycle of the year, moving from Winter through Spring and Summer to Autumn. Rather than separating the four seasons into four independent movements, however, Bullock joins Spring and Summer within the large central movement, creating a continuous musical progression from awakening to growth and fulfilment.

The **opening movement,** *Winter,* begins in a world of restraint and transparency. Individual wind instruments emerge from a quiet orchestral background, creating a sense of stillness that is nevertheless inhabited by movement and expectation. As the music develops, the orchestral texture gradually broadens and acquires increasing energy and weight. Winter is not presented as complete immobility, but as a landscape in which life continues beneath an apparently dormant surface.

The central **movement** begins with *Spring,* bringing an immediate transformation. Rapid string movement sets the music in motion, while solo wind instruments and larger orchestral forces enter into an increasingly varied and energetic succession of episodes. Spring is not a gentle awakening but a release of activity, in which new musical ideas and colours continually emerge from the restless orchestral current.

At **letter J**, the movement passes into *Summer,* and the change is marked explicitly in the score. The transition is more than a continuation of Spring. The music enters a new seasonal space, allowing the energy generated by the earlier movement to broaden and mature. The great central movement therefore traces a continuous process: life first awakening and multiplying, then reaching a fuller and more expansive state.

The **final movement,** *Autumn,* introduces a broader and more reflective perspective. After the extended growth and energy of the central movement, the music acquires a greater sense of space. Individual instrumental voices and sustained orchestral textures become increasingly important, while moments of considerable power alternate with passages of growing transparency. The symphony gradually moves towards a quieter conclusion, not as an ending of the natural cycle but as a moment of repose after its full unfolding.

Throughout *Waldjahreszeiten*, the forest is more than a landscape to be described. It becomes an environment in which the changing conditions of life can be experienced. The orchestra continually moves between individual voices and collective sonority, between stillness and activity, creating a symphonic landscape in which the passage of the seasons becomes a larger meditation on growth, maturity and change.

Written in Canach, Luxembourg, in June 2015.

Discussion

Symphony No. 22, *Waldjahreszeiten*, occupies an important place in Dafydd Bullock's continuing exploration of landscape. By this point, geographical experience had become one of the most productive sources of his symphonic imagination. Mountains, lakes, cities and river valleys had all generated works in which place was rarely treated as a simple pictorial subject. Landscape had increasingly become a means of thinking musically: a source of scale, atmosphere, movement and structure. With Symphony No. 21, *Mosel*, the idea of place had expanded further still, becoming a meeting point between nature, history, culture and personal belonging. *Waldjahreszeiten* takes a different direction. It leaves behind the historical and cultural accumulation of the Mosel and enters a world in which the essential subject is change itself.

The forest provides the environment in which that change can be observed. Unlike a mountain, which may be experienced from a distance as a single monumental form, a forest is encountered from within. Its identity is made from innumerable individual presences. It can appear still while being full of movement; silent while containing countless small sounds; permanent while constantly changing. The orchestration of *Symphony No. 22* responds naturally to this environment. Again and again, individual instrumental voices emerge from the larger body of the orchestra, only to disappear into it once more. The forest becomes not a picture but an inhabited musical space.

The formal conception of the symphony is particularly revealing. The four seasons are all present, but Bullock does not divide them into four separate movements. Instead, *Winter* occupies the first movement, *Spring* and *Summer* form the extended central movement, and *Autumn* provides the conclusion. This immediately gives the work a different shape from a conventional sequence of seasonal pictures. The two seasons of growth occupy the heart of the symphony and are joined into one continuous span. *Spring* becomes *Summer* not through interruption but through transformation.

The **first movement,** *Winter*, begins with restraint and transparency. Individual wind instruments emerge against a quiet orchestral background, and the opening creates a strong sense of space. Nothing is hurried. The musical world seems almost suspended, but its stillness is never empty. Separate voices enter and make their presence felt within the larger texture. The forest is quiet, but it is not lifeless.

As the movement develops, this apparent stillness begins to reveal its hidden energy. The orchestra broadens, instrumental groups become more active and the initially restricted sound world gradually expands. Winter is therefore not treated as a condition of complete immobility or desolation. Rather, it becomes a season of concealed life. The landscape appears dormant only when viewed from a distance. Once one begins to listen more closely, movement becomes apparent.

This is characteristic of Bullock's treatment of landscape. An initial atmosphere is rarely allowed simply to remain in place. The music establishes a world and then begins to explore what may exist within it. Individual instruments assume particular importance because they alter the listener's perception of scale. A single wind voice emerging from an orchestral texture draws attention away from the generalised image of landscape towards something more particular and immediate.

Winter thus becomes a movement of discovery. The quiet opening is gradually enlarged, but the expansion does not destroy the atmosphere from which the movement began. Instead, the music discovers that stillness can contain tension and that apparent inactivity can conceal considerable force. The forest remains itself, but the listener has learned to hear it differently.

The arrival of *Spring* transforms this world immediately. The **central movement** begins with motion, rapid string writing generating an energetic current from which the rest of the orchestral activity begins to grow. The contrast with *Winter* is striking. Where the first movement invited the listener to attend to isolated sounds within a large space, *Spring* produces a world in which activity seems to appear everywhere.

This is not Spring as a gentle or sentimental awakening. It is Spring as proliferation. Musical ideas emerge, instrumental colours multiply and the distinction between individual and collective activity becomes increasingly fluid. Solo wind instruments rise from the moving orchestral texture, larger forces gather around them and the music passes through a succession of changing episodes. The sense is one of growth that is almost impossible to contain.

The great central movement is therefore the symphony's most expansive span, but its expansion is organic rather than merely architectural. The music does not simply accumulate weight and move towards a predetermined climax. It continually changes its perspective. At one moment a single instrument assumes particular prominence; at another, the full resources of the orchestra are brought into play. The distinction between chamber music and symphonic writing becomes remarkably fluid.

Then, at letter J, a decisive transformation occurs. The score explicitly marks the arrival of *Sommer – Summer*, making clear that the second movement is not solely a representation of Spring but a continuous journey through the two great seasons of growth.

This is a crucial point in understanding the symphony. *Summer* is not treated as an entirely separate world requiring a new movement. Instead, it grows out of *Spring*. The formal design itself reflects the natural process. One does not wake one morning and find that the season has abruptly changed in the manner of a theatrical scene change. Spring gradually fulfils its own possibilities and becomes Summer.

The music at this point enters a new harmonic and textural region, and the seasonal transformation is immediately registered by the change of musical environment. Yet the continuity with what has preceded remains essential. *Summer* is not a rejection of *Spring* but its consequence.

This gives the central movement a particularly satisfying internal architecture. *Spring* represents awakening, multiplication and the release of energy. *Summer* represents the continuation and broadening of that process: growth reaching maturity, activity acquiring greater space and the forest existing in a condition of fullness. The two seasons together form the central life of the symphony.

This also explains why the second movement is so substantial. It carries the weight of the entire period of growth. *Winter* provides the condition from which life emerges; *Autumn* will later provide reflection upon what has passed. But Spring and Summer together occupy the living centre of the work.

The f**inal movement**, *Autumn*, introduces another change of perspective. After the extended energy and expansion of the central movement, time begins to move differently. The music is broader and more spacious, allowing sustained textures and individual instrumental voices to assume particular importance. Yet *Autumn* is not simply a return to the stillness of *Winter.*

The two movements may both contain transparency, but their emotional direction is different. *Winter* looks forward. It contains life that has not yet revealed itself. *Autumn* looks backwards. It contains the memory of fulfilment.

This distinction gives the symphony much of its deeper coherence. By the time we reach *Autumn*, the listener has already experienced the extraordinary release of *Spring* and the fullness of *Summer.* The quieter passages of the final movement therefore cannot be heard innocently. They carry the memory of what has preceded them.

The music moves between substantial orchestral assertions and increasingly intimate textures. There are moments when the collective force of the orchestra returns with considerable power, but these are eventually followed by reduction. Individual voices emerge once more. The symphony begins to release the density and energy accumulated during its central span.

The conclusion is therefore not simply an image of decline. It is a form of completion. The forest does not disappear with the arrival of Autumn; it changes its character. Activity gives way to another kind of richness, and the final quietness is not emptiness but repose.

Seen as a whole, the symphony has a remarkably natural dramatic shape. *Winter* establishes a world of latent possibility. *Spring* releases that potential into movement and growth. *Summer* allows that growth to reach its fullest extent. *Autumn* then introduces distance, memory and reflection.

The decision to join Spring and Summer within a single movement is central to this conception. Had the four seasons been presented in four separate movements, the work might have suggested a sequence of contrasting panels. Instead, the central movement becomes a continuous process of becoming. The symphony does not simply tell us that Spring is followed by Summer; it allows us to experience one growing into the other.

This is perhaps the most important formal insight of *Waldjahreszeiten*. The seasons are not separate illustrations placed beside one another. They are stages within a single life.

The forest itself remains constant throughout, but our experience of it changes. In Winter we listen for life beneath stillness. In Spring the world suddenly becomes crowded with movement. In Summer that movement expands into abundance and maturity. In Autumn the same world is seen through the awareness of time having passed.

That continuity is essential. The symphony is not fundamentally about four different landscapes. It is about one landscape undergoing transformation.

In this respect, *Waldjahreszeiten* represents a further development in Bullock's treatment of nature. Earlier geographical symphonies often involved journeys through particular places. Mountains could generate a sense of ascent and scale; lakes and valleys could create their own spatial and emotional environments; cities and regions could bring history and human culture into the music. Here the subject is less a place encountered than an environment observed through time.

The forest becomes a kind of permanent presence against which change can be measured. It survives Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn without becoming the same from one season to the next. The orchestra expresses precisely this paradox. Sometimes it acts as a single collective organism; sometimes it divides into individual voices whose separate identities become clearly audible. The music is constantly changing, yet its fundamental environment remains recognisable.

There is something quietly philosophical in this conception. Change does not destroy continuity. Growth contains the future memory of its own passing, and decline is not equivalent to disappearance. The seasons move onwards, but the world in which they occur remains. For that reason, the symphony's conclusion acquires a significance beyond the seasonal subject itself. After Winter's expectancy and the great central progression through Spring and Summer, Autumn brings

the music towards a state of repose. But it is not the repose of an ending in the absolute sense. It is the repose of a cycle that will begin again.

Symphony No. 22 therefore completes the journey of the year while avoiding the obvious symmetry of four equal movements. Its structure is more organic. Winter prepares. Spring awakens. Summer fulfils. Autumn remembers. At the heart of the work stands the forest: apparently constant, endlessly changing, full of individual voices yet always heard as a single living world.

After the historically crowded landscape of *Mosel*, this is a striking change of perspective. The Romans, Marx and the bells of Trier have receded. In their place is a more elemental subject: the passing of the seasons and the life of the natural world. Yet the symphony is not a retreat from the human world. Its deeper subject is still experience. The forest becomes a way of understanding growth, fulfilment, change and memory. Landscape, as it increasingly does in these symphonies, is no longer simply something to be described. It becomes a way of understanding life itself.

Symphony No. 23 Op. 263

Traunsee

Programme Note

Symphony No. 23 takes its inspiration from the Traunsee, one of the great lakes of the Austrian Salzkammergut. In contrast to the monumental landscapes and historical associations that had inspired several of Dafydd Bullock's earlier symphonies, *Traunsee* is conceived on a more intimate orchestral scale. Scored for flute, oboe, two clarinets, horn, harp and strings, the work explores the changing character of the landscape through a single continuous movement.

The symphony opens with flowing string movement, supported by the gentle presence of the harp and a broad line in the horn. From this transparent beginning, the musical argument gradually expands as the woodwinds enter and the various instrumental colours begin to interact. Throughout the work, passages of movement and energy alternate with broader and more spacious episodes, allowing the same landscape to be experienced from continually changing perspectives.

The reduced orchestra is central to the character of the symphony. Individual instruments are allowed to retain a strong sense of identity, and the music frequently moves between intimate chamber-like combinations and the fuller sonority of the complete ensemble. The resulting contrasts create a wide range of expression without requiring the large orchestral forces of some of the preceding symphonies.

As the work progresses, the music gathers increasing energy and dramatic weight. Yet its climactic passages arise not from sheer orchestral mass but from the gradual accumulation of material and colour. After the most substantial developments of the later sections, the symphony begins to withdraw. The tempo slows, the texture becomes increasingly transparent and the music returns to the flowing world from which it first emerged.

The conclusion does not seek a grand final gesture. Instead, the movement subsides into a quieter continuation, leaving the impression that the musical journey has taken place within a landscape which itself remains unchanged.

In *Traunsee*, the lake is therefore not simply a subject to be described. It becomes a constant presence against which movement, change and transformation can unfold. It was written in Hinterthal, Austria in August, 2017 and is dedicated to Britta and Raimund Lang.

Discussion

With *Symphony No. 23,* Dafydd Bullock remains within the Austrian landscape that had already provided such a fertile source for his symphonic imagination, but the perspective changes once again. *Waldjahreszeiten*, the preceding symphony, had emerged from an Austrian forest and explored that environment through the changing cycle of Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn. Its central concern was time: the forest remained while the seasons transformed its appearance and its life. *Traunsee* moves from the enclosed world of the forest towards the open expanse of water, but it continues the same fascination with a landscape that remains itself while everything around it changes.

The difference lies in the way that change is experienced. In *Waldjahreszeiten*, the seasons provide the symphony with its architecture. Winter prepares, Spring awakens, Summer fulfils and Autumn reflects. The listener experiences a clear progression through the year. *Traunsee*, by contrast, takes place within a single continuous movement. There are no separate movements corresponding to different conditions of the landscape. Instead, the music itself moves through changing states while the lake remains as the constant presence at the centre of the experience.

This formal decision is fundamental to the work's character. A continuous movement allows the symphony to behave less like a sequence of views and more like an extended period of observation. The music changes, gathers energy, relaxes, broadens and contracts, but there is no sense of leaving one world entirely behind and entering another. The transformations occur within a single environment.

The opening immediately establishes this principle. The symphony begins not with a grand statement but with flowing string movement, supported by harp and horn. The sound-world is transparent, mobile and spacious. The choice of instrumentation is itself revealing. There are no trumpets, trombones or timpani. Instead, Bullock works with a relatively small ensemble in which the individual identity of each instrumental colour can remain clearly audible.

The lake is therefore not established through orchestral grandeur. It is suggested through continuity. The flowing string texture creates an environment which seems capable of continuing indefinitely, while the horn provides a broader melodic line above it and the harp contributes a different kind of movement and resonance. The effect is not simply descriptive. One does not hear an imitation of water. Rather, the music establishes a condition of perpetual motion.

This distinction is important because *Traunsee* refuses to become a static landscape piece. A lake might easily invite a composer towards stillness, reflection and sustained tranquillity, but Bullock is interested in something more changeable. Water is never entirely motionless. Its surface shifts according to light, wind and weather, while its appearance alters according to the observer's position. The symphony responds to this instability of perception.

As the music develops, the woodwinds enter and the orchestral texture becomes increasingly varied. The movement repeatedly expands and contracts. Material gathers into fuller and more energetic passages, only to open out again into greater transparency. The orchestra does not behave as a single block of sound. Its weight is constantly redistributed, allowing different instrumental combinations to emerge and recede.

This creates one of the most characteristic features of the symphony: the continual alteration of scale. At times the music has the intimacy of chamber music, with individual voices sharply defined. At others, the full available ensemble creates a far more substantial sound. Yet because the

orchestra is relatively small, even its climaxes retain a sense of clarity. The listener remains aware of the separate elements from which the collective sound has been formed.

There is a notable confidence in this economy. Earlier symphonies had often explored the possibilities of a larger orchestral canvas, particularly during the Austrian works in which mountains and other great landscapes encouraged a sense of scale and expansion. In *Traunsee*, Bullock demonstrates that symphonic breadth does not depend upon increasing the number of instruments. The work remains substantial in duration and ambition, but its scale is achieved through transformation rather than accumulation.

The continuous movement can therefore be understood as a sequence of musical waves. Energy gathers, expands and eventually releases itself, but the release does not represent a final resolution. Instead, it creates the conditions for another transformation. The music repeatedly changes perspective without abandoning the environment from which it emerged.

This is very different from the architectural behaviour of some of the mountain symphonies. Those works could create a strong sense of ascent, arrival or enlargement, in which the musical structure seemed to correspond to the physical experience of approaching or inhabiting a monumental landscape. *Traunsee* does not need to arrive anywhere. Its subject is already present. The listener remains beside the lake while the conditions change.

This gives the work a more contemplative quality, although contemplation here should not be confused with inactivity. Much happens during the course of the symphony. Harmonic regions shift, instrumental relationships change and the music passes through passages of considerable energy and dramatic force. But these developments are not directed towards a single geographical or emotional destination. They are different states of the same experience.

The reduced orchestration becomes increasingly important as the movement progresses. Because the full ensemble has been withheld for much of the work, the more substantial passages acquire considerable power. The climaxes do not depend upon sheer volume but upon contrast. Having heard the instruments individually and in small groups, one experiences their collective presence more intensely when the music gathers them together. This is a particularly mature aspect of Bullock's orchestral writing. Power is achieved not by using more sound but by understanding the value of less. The orchestra has become a landscape in its own right, a field in which different elements can become visible according to the changing conditions of the music.

The later stages of the symphony bring the most substantial accumulations of energy. Yet even here there is no sense that the work is preparing for a conventional triumph. The music reaches moments of considerable intensity, but these are temporary conditions. As on the lake itself, a change in weather or light can transform the entire appearance of the landscape without altering the landscape's essential identity.

Eventually the music begins to withdraw. The slowing of the tempo and the return towards greater transparency are especially significant because they recall the fundamental conditions of the opening. The symphony has travelled through a wide range of activity, colour and emotional intensity, but the final stages do not attempt to deny the movement from which everything began.

The return is not literal. The music does not simply repeat the opening and close the circle neatly. Rather, the earlier sound-world is heard after everything that has happened. The flowing texture acquires a different significance because it now carries the memory of the journey. This gives the ending its particular beauty. This final idea seems to me to be central to the work. Human experience is temporary. Music moves through time, and the listener travels with it. But the lake

exists independently of the symphony's drama. It was present before the first note and remains after the last.

This is, of course, an imagined relationship rather than a philosophical statement made explicitly by the score, but the musical form encourages precisely such a response. The symphony is a journey through changing conditions without a final destination. It allows the listener to experience movement while remaining within the same larger environment.

Placed after *Waldjahreszeiten*, this becomes particularly revealing. The two symphonies form an intriguing pair of Austrian landscape works. In the earlier work, the forest provides a permanent environment through which the cycle of the year passes. In *Traunsee*, the lake provides an equally constant environment through which the music itself undergoes transformation. One work is structured by time. The other is structured by continuity.

In both cases, however, Bullock is moving away from landscape as simple description. The forest is not merely a collection of trees, and the lake is not merely an expanse of water. Each becomes a way of organising musical experience. The landscape determines not only atmosphere but behaviour. This is an important development in the symphonic journey. Earlier works had often asked what music could discover in a particular place. By *Symphony No. 23*, the question has become more subtle. What kind of musical form does a place itself suggest?

The answer in *Traunsee* is the continuous movement. The symphony does not divide the lake into separate episodes because the experience of remaining beside it is itself continuous. Changes occur, sometimes gradually and sometimes dramatically, but they are all absorbed into the same larger presence. The intimacy of the scoring reinforces this. The symphony does not stand before the landscape and proclaim its magnificence. It inhabits it. The listener is brought close enough to hear the individual instrumental voices and to experience the changing relationships between them.

Perhaps that is the most significant difference between this work and some of the earlier Austrian symphonies. The mountains had encouraged a sense of distance, scale and monumentality. The forest of *Waldjahreszeiten* invited the listener inside a living environment. *Traunsee* goes further still. It asks the listener simply to remain long enough for perception itself to change.

The lake becomes calm, active, spacious, turbulent, intimate and expansive, not necessarily because the geographical object has altered completely, but because the music has changed the way in which it is experienced. By the end, after the many transformations of the single movement, the sound withdraws towards the flowing world from which it began.

In that sense, *Symphony No. 23* represents another quiet but important stage in Bullock's development. The geographical symphony has travelled from journey and discovery, through history and belonging, towards a more inward understanding of place. Landscape is no longer simply where the music happens or what the music portrays. It has become a model for musical thought itself: continuity containing change, permanence surrounding movement, and a larger world in which individual experience can briefly unfold before returning to silence.

Symphony No. 24 Op. 279

Bricha

Programme Note

In 1947, many Jewish Displaced Persons in post-war Europe faced an uncertain and often desperate future. Among the routes used in the journey towards Palestine, later Israel, was the crossing of the Alps into Italy through the Krimmler Achental. The British blockade made legal passage increasingly difficult, and the underground organisation known as *Bricha* - the Hebrew word for "flight" or "escape" — helped thousands of Jewish survivors and displaced people to leave Europe and make their way towards a new life.

Dafydd Bullock's *Symphony No. 24, Bricha* - written in the Krimmler Achenthal and Hinterthal, Austria and in Senheim, Germany, in August 2018 - is a tribute to the endurance, desperation and determination of those who undertook this journey. The work is conceived as a single continuous movement, its uninterrupted form reflecting the physical and emotional necessity of continuing onwards.

The symphony begins in immediate motion. There is no extended introduction or picturesque evocation of the Alpine landscape. The mountains are not presented as objects of admiration, but as terrain which must be crossed. Relentless rhythmic movement establishes a sense of urgency, and throughout the work the music passes through changing conditions of tension, struggle, exhaustion and renewed determination. Within this collective movement, individual instrumental voices repeatedly emerge. These moments of greater intimacy provide an important contrast to the larger orchestral forces, suggesting the human individuality that lies within every historical movement. The journey may be shared by many, but it is experienced by each person separately.

As the symphony progresses, its emotional character gradually begins to change. Fragments of the Jewish song *Hava Nagila* appear with increasing frequency, at first woven into the continuing symphonic argument and later becoming increasingly recognisable and celebratory. Their emergence does not erase the suffering or danger of the journey. Rather, the possibility of celebration grows out of endurance itself.

The final stages of *Bricha* therefore transform the symphony's original urgency into something more affirmative. The work does not offer a simplistic picture of victory, nor does it attempt to forget the ordeal which has preceded it. Instead, it arrives at a hard-won sense of identity, survival and the recovery of joy.

In *Bricha*, the Alpine landscape is no longer simply a source of musical inspiration. It becomes the physical setting of a human journey in which the need to continue, against extraordinary difficulty, is itself the central dramatic force.

Discussion

There is a decisive change in perspective with *Symphony No. 24*. The Austrian landscape remains physically present, as it had in several of the preceding symphonies, but its meaning is transformed. Mountains, forests and lakes had provided Dafydd Bullock with subjects through which questions of scale, form, movement, continuity and the passage of time could be explored. In *Bricha*, however, landscape is no longer the principal subject of the symphony. The Krimmler Achental is the terrain through which a human drama must unfold. That distinction changes everything. The mountains are not there to be contemplated. They have to be crossed.

The historical circumstances behind the work give this fact its full force. In 1947, Jewish Displaced Persons who had survived the destruction of European Jewry and the upheavals of the Second World War were still searching for somewhere to belong. For many, the journey towards Palestine involved clandestine routes and extraordinary physical hardship. The underground organisation known as *Bricha* helped make such movement possible, and the crossing through the Alps became part of a larger journey away from the ruins of Europe and towards the possibility of a future.

Bullock's response to this history is not documentary. The symphony does not attempt to narrate particular events or assign musical identities to particular historical figures. Instead, it takes the fundamental experience of the journey — urgency, endurance, danger, exhaustion, persistence and eventual release — and allows these forces to determine the behaviour of the music.

The decision to cast the entire work as a single movement is therefore essential. A journey of this kind cannot easily be divided into neatly separated stages. One does not arrive at a formal cadence, pause and begin a new movement in a new emotional world. Conditions change, moments of relative stillness occur, new difficulties arise, energy returns and exhaustion follows, but the larger necessity remains constant. One has to continue.

The opening establishes that necessity immediately. There is no extended introduction in which the listener is invited to admire the Alpine landscape or absorb a particular atmosphere. The music begins in motion. The physical energy of the opening creates a sense of urgency from the outset, and the landscape becomes inseparable from the act of crossing it.

This represents a striking transformation of an idea that had become increasingly important in the preceding symphonies. In the earlier Austrian works, movement through landscape could be exploratory or contemplative. Mountains suggested ascent, lakes encouraged prolonged observation, and forests offered an environment within which the changing seasons could be experienced. In *Bricha*, movement has an altogether different meaning. It is not chosen but necessary.

That sense of necessity gives the symphony its remarkable continuity. The music may alter its tempo, texture, harmonic direction and orchestral weight, but beneath these transformations lies a persistent instinct towards forward movement. Even when the energy subsides, the journey has not ended. The quieter passages become temporary conditions within the same larger experience.

The work's orchestration is central to its human character. Against passages in which the orchestra acts with considerable collective force, individual instruments repeatedly emerge into prominence. These moments are particularly important because the historical background of *Bricha* involves large numbers: displaced persons, refugees, survivors, populations moving across borders. Such language is unavoidable when describing history, but it also has the effect of making individual human beings disappear into abstraction.

The music repeatedly resists that abstraction. Within the collective movement, individual voices become audible. A solo wind instrument emerging from the orchestral texture cannot be understood simply as an individual historical portrait; the symphony does not require such literal interpretation. But the musical effect is nevertheless deeply human. The collective is repeatedly interrupted by the presence of the individual. One becomes aware that the great movement of history consists of separate lives.

This tension between the many and the one becomes one of the work's most powerful structural principles. The orchestra gathers, moves with collective energy and creates a sense of shared momentum, but individual voices continue to emerge from within it. The symphony never allows the multitude to become anonymous.

Nor does it romanticise suffering. This is one of the work's most impressive qualities. There are passages of great force and determination, but the music does not turn the journey into a conventional heroic narrative. The people commemorated here were not undertaking an adventure in search of glory. They were travelling because remaining where they were offered no future.

The distinction between heroism and endurance is therefore fundamental. Heroism may suggest a voluntary confrontation with danger, perhaps undertaken in pursuit of an ideal. Endurance is something different. It is the capacity to continue when the alternatives have disappeared. *Bricha* is concerned above all with that second quality.

The music repeatedly accumulates energy and then seems simply to continue. Climaxes do not necessarily provide resolution. Moments of struggle are followed not by triumphant arrival but by further movement. The symphony appears to understand that endurance has no convenient dramatic shape. There is no guarantee that one struggle will be the last.

The one-movement structure makes this particularly convincing. The music does not present a series of self-contained episodes but a continuous changing environment. Musical conditions alter as the physical and emotional conditions of the journey might alter. There are passages of collective urgency, moments of greater exposure, sudden changes of orchestral colour and periods in which individual voices emerge from a larger surrounding silence or stillness. The landscape, in this sense, has become an obstacle rather than an image.

That may be the most significant development in Bullock's relationship with Austria. Earlier symphonies had explored the grandeur of the mountains and the changing life of the natural world. *Bricha* retains the physical reality of the same landscape but sees it from the perspective of those who must traverse it under extreme circumstances. Geography becomes history. Distance becomes suffering. Forward movement becomes survival. There is also a more personal connection between the composer and the landscape through which this historical journey took place. Bullock himself had walked a substantial part of the route. His experience was, of course, separated by more than seventy years from the circumstances of the Jewish Displaced Persons whose journey inspired the symphony, and no comparison between the two experiences is possible. Yet walking through the same landscape gave the composer a direct physical knowledge of the terrain: its distances, gradients, changing perspectives and the sheer fact that mountains are experienced very differently from within than when viewed from afar. This may help to explain the unusually physical character of *Bricha*. The Alps are not observed as scenery. They are encountered as terrain through which one must move.

Yet the symphony is not content to remain within darkness. Towards its later stages, another element begins to emerge: fragments of *Hava Nagila*. This is one of the most important features of the entire work, because the melody does not simply appear at the end as a convenient gesture of celebration. Its presence develops gradually. Fragments emerge within the continuing musical

argument, becoming increasingly frequent, increasingly recognisable and increasingly celebratory. The effect is profound. The symphony does not move suddenly from suffering to joy. Joy has to find its way into the music. At first, the fragments of *Hava Nagila* exist within a world still shaped by the struggle that preceded them. They are not allowed to erase the urgency of the symphony. Instead, they gradually transform its emotional possibilities. The familiar melody begins to establish another kind of presence: one connected not simply with a destination but with identity itself.

This is what makes the emergence of the song so powerful. The historical journey commemorated by *Bricha* involved movement away from catastrophe and displacement, but it was also a movement towards belonging. The increasing prominence of *Hava Nagila* therefore becomes much more than musical quotation. It represents the recovery of a voice, and because that voice emerges only gradually, its eventual celebratory character has been earned.

The symphony's emotional trajectory can therefore be understood as a movement from flight towards affirmation, but the transition is neither simple nor sentimental. The earlier suffering remains part of the music's memory. Celebration does not cancel what has happened. It becomes possible because survival has taken place despite it. This is perhaps the deepest achievement of the work. Bullock does not transform suffering into triumph in the conventional symphonic sense. There is no implication that hardship is somehow justified because it leads eventually to a grand conclusion. Instead, the symphony acknowledges endurance as a reality in itself and then asks what can remain after endurance. The answer is identity and then finally, joy.

The increasing presence of *Hava Nagila* gives the closing stages their particular emotional force. The celebration is collective, but the work has spent much of its duration insisting upon the importance of the individual within the collective. The final affirmation therefore does not feel like the triumph of an abstract people or historical movement. It carries with it the memory of the individual voices that have emerged throughout the symphony. The many celebrate, but the music has taught us to hear them as human beings.

This makes the final transformation particularly moving. The urgent physical energy of the opening has travelled through struggle, uncertainty and exhaustion. Gradually, another possibility has entered the music. The fragments of *Hava Nagila* become more confident, more frequent and more celebratory until the emotional landscape of the symphony has been fundamentally transformed. The journey has not been forgotten. It has been survived.

There is a further poignancy in the work's origins. The sketches were begun at the Jaidbach Alm, written, as Bullock recalls, on the back of a menu card. The dedication to the Alm preserves that moment of composition with characteristic humour and affection. Yet there is also an unexpected symbolic resonance in the image. A symphony about a journey through the Alps began in the very landscape through which that historical journey had passed.

The menu card is a small and almost comic object; the symphony that grew from it addresses one of the great human stories of displacement and survival. That contrast is strangely appropriate. Music often begins in the most ordinary circumstances and acquires its larger meaning only as the imagination begins to work.

Within the sequence of Bullock's symphonies, *Bricha* therefore represents a significant transformation. It remains connected to the Austrian works which precede it, but it changes the function of landscape. The forest of *Waldjahreszeiten* allowed the symphony to explore the cycle of time. The Traunsee became a permanent presence against which musical transformation could unfold. In *Bricha*, the landscape itself becomes part of the human struggle.

The mountains have to be crossed, but the symphony's deeper subject is not the crossing alone. It is what survives the crossing. The gradual emergence of *Hava Nagila* provides the answer. Against displacement, identity survives. Against exhaustion, the possibility of continuing survives. Against catastrophe, the possibility of belonging survives. Eventually, after all that has preceded it, so does the possibility of celebration.

For that reason, *Symphony No. 24* is not simply a historical symphony or a memorial work. It is a work about endurance, but it refuses to leave endurance as its final word. Its great achievement is to allow joy to emerge without sentimentality, because the music has made us understand the cost at which that joy has been recovered. The journey begins because there is nowhere else to go. It ends not with the denial of suffering, but with something suffering could not destroy. A people who have been forced to flee find their voice again - and the fragments which gradually emerge from the struggle become, at last, a song of rejoicing.

Symphony No. 25 Op. 286

Programme Note

Symphony No. 25, Opus 286, is inscribed simply f*ür Ulrike*. The work unfolds as a four-movement symphonic journey in which contrasting states of energy, tension and reflection are brought into a closely connected whole. Its musical language is direct and rhythmically purposeful, yet beneath its apparent simplicity lies a persistent concern with transformation: musical figures recur, change their surroundings, alter their character and acquire new significance as the Symphony progresses.

The **opening movement** establishes much of the Symphony's fundamental vocabulary. A firm rhythmic pulse is repeatedly set against longer melodic and harmonic spans, while the gradual expansion of the orchestral texture gives the music a sense of growth rather than of abrupt sectional contrast. The writing is particularly attentive to the relationship between repeated rhythmic figures and sustained sonorities, allowing momentum and breadth to coexist.

The **second movement** provides a different kind of experience, opening the musical space and allowing individual instrumental voices a greater degree of prominence. Its contrasts are less concerned with simple opposition than with changing degrees of density and intensity. The orchestra becomes a medium through which ideas are passed from one instrumental colour to another, so that continuity is maintained even when the surface of the music changes considerably.

The **third movement** is the most kinetic part of the Symphony. It begins with an unusually transparent string texture and develops through a succession of transformations in which musical gestures migrate between instrumental groups. The music repeatedly gathers momentum, expands into fuller orchestral sonorities and then withdraws again, creating an impression of restless movement rather than conventional scherzo-like playfulness. Its returning material is continually re-coloured and re-contextualised, and the recurrence of the principal ideas towards the end of the movement gives the whole process a strong sense of coherence.

The **finale** begins at a markedly slower tempo and immediately changes the atmosphere of the work. Its opening sonorities are spacious and sustained, before a faster episode introduces renewed movement. The finale therefore does not simply provide a triumphant conclusion to the Symphony. Instead, it draws together the opposing tendencies that have characterised the work: stillness and movement, individual voices and collective sonority, rhythmic insistence and sustained reflection. The result is a Symphony whose unity lies less in the repetition of a single theme than in the persistent transformation of its musical materials. It is dedicated to Ulrike Wiedenbach.

Discussion

The inscription *für Ulrike* at the head of Symphony No. 25 is an intimate dedication attached to a work of considerable orchestral scale, and the contrast between the personal gesture and the public nature of the symphonic form is characteristic of the music itself. The Symphony does not announce a programme or attempt to translate a particular narrative into musical events. Instead, it communicates through the gradual unfolding and transformation of musical experience. Its coherence arises from the way rhythm, texture, instrumental colour and recurring gesture are continually re-examined.

The **opening movement** establishes this principle with considerable economy. The Symphony begins with the strings rather than with a full orchestral proclamation, and the initial rhythmic figures are repeated with a persistence that gives them structural importance. As the movement progresses, the material is progressively transferred and enlarged. Woodwind and brass sonorities enter into the argument, while the strings continue to provide much of the rhythmic and motivic foundation. The effect is not one of a theme being presented and subsequently decorated, but of a musical idea discovering its potential through orchestral expansion.

This is an important characteristic of the Symphony as a whole. Bullock's orchestration does not merely provide colour around an already completed musical argument. Instrumentation itself becomes part of the developmental process. A figure may first belong to the strings and later appear in the winds; a rhythmic pattern may be compressed or expanded; a sustained harmony may acquire a completely different expressive function when placed against moving material. The music therefore develops through changes of context as much as through conventional thematic development.

The first movement also establishes a characteristic tension between repetition and change. Rhythmic figures recur with enough regularity to create a strong sense of identity, yet their surroundings are constantly altered. This allows the music to remain recognisable without becoming static. The repeated figures become almost physical presences within the Symphony: they provide propulsion, but they also provide memory. When they return, they carry something of their previous appearances with them.

The **second movement** deepens this approach by allowing greater space for individual instrumental voices. The orchestral texture becomes more differentiated, and solo or quasi-solo passages emerge from the larger fabric. Rather than breaking the Symphony into unrelated episodes, however, these moments intensify its underlying concern with the relationship between individual and collective sound. The individual voice is heard because the surrounding texture permits it to emerge; when the full orchestra returns, that voice has become part of a larger continuity.

It is the **third movement,** however, that reveals most clearly the extent to which this Symphony is concerned with movement itself. The tempo is fast and the compound 12/8 metre creates a continuous rhythmic current. Yet the music does not simply exploit this rhythmic energy for excitement. Its opening is remarkably restrained. The first impulse is given to the strings, and the musical line is sinuous and chromatically coloured rather than strongly declamatory.

From this modest beginning the movement grows by accumulation. Material is passed between the string sections, individual wind instruments enter as solo voices, and increasingly substantial combinations of instruments are formed. The marked divisions A, B, C and onwards do not create a succession of independent episodes so much as stages in a continuous process. The same basic

musical identity repeatedly reappears, but its expressive meaning changes according to register, instrumentation, density and harmonic context.

This is particularly evident in the middle of the movement. The orchestra periodically reaches a state of considerable activity, only for the texture to contract again. At other points, sustained notes in the brass stand against highly mobile string and wind writing. Such contrasts prevent the movement's rhythmic momentum from becoming monotonous. Movement is continually being interrupted, redirected or redefined.

The crucial point is that the movement does not treat contrast as opposition between unrelated materials. Instead, its contrasts arise from the transformation of a relatively limited musical vocabulary. The returning figures at the later stages of the movement are recognisably connected with what has gone before, but they have accumulated the experience of their earlier appearances. The result is a movement that feels circular without being static: it returns, but it does not return unchanged.

This gives the third movement a much more important role in the Symphony than that of a conventional scherzo or central interlude. It is the point at which the Symphony's musical materials are subjected most insistently to motion. The first movement establishes them; the second allows them to acquire greater individuality and expressive space; the third takes them apart and sets them moving through the orchestra. In that sense it is the Symphony's kinetic centre.

The **finale** consequently acquires a particular significance. Its opening tempo immediately creates a sense of release from the relentless activity of the preceding movement. Sustained notes and carefully spaced instrumental entries give the opening a breadth that contrasts strongly with the 12/8 momentum of the third movement. Yet this is not simply a return to tranquillity. The finale subsequently accelerates dramatically, bringing back vigorous string writing. The contrast suggests that the energy of the third movement has not disappeared; it has been transformed.

This is perhaps the most satisfying aspect of the Symphony's architecture. Its four movements can be understood not as four separate characters but as four states of the same musical world. The first establishes rhythmic and harmonic identity. The second opens that identity into a more spacious and differentiated expressive field. The third subjects it to continuous kinetic transformation. The finale then confronts the consequences of that activity, moving between spaciousness and renewed propulsion.

The orchestration reinforces this architecture throughout. The work employs a relatively concentrated orchestra - double woodwind, horns, trumpets, timpani and strings - but obtains considerable variety from the changing combinations within it. Individual winds are frequently allowed to emerge from the orchestral fabric, while the strings can function either as a unified rhythmic body or as several independent strands. Brass instruments, rather than being reserved solely for climactic reinforcement, are often used to provide sustained harmonic weight against the mobile material elsewhere.

The Symphony's language is consequently less about stylistic declaration than about continuity through transformation. Its musical gestures are rarely abandoned outright. They are repeated, displaced, redistributed, stretched, compressed or placed into new instrumental contexts. This gives the work an organic quality: one musical state grows naturally out of another.

Symphony No. 25 is therefore a work whose unity lies in memory, transformation and movement. Its materials remain recognisable because they are continually remembered; they remain alive because they are continually changed. The third movement is central to this conception, acting as the great engine of transformation between the more measured worlds of the surrounding movements. The

finale does not erase that experience but absorbs it, allowing the Symphony to arrive at its conclusion with a sense that the journey has altered the meaning of the music with which it began.

Symphony No. 26 Op. 301

Ganges

Programme Note

S*ymphony No. 26, Ganges*, was inspired by Dafydd Bullock's first extended visit to India in February 2020 and is the first of three symphonies arising directly from his experiences there. It is dedicated to Harshwardhan Singh Rathore, who introduced the composer to his country, and to Ollie, who was born shortly after Bullock's return to Europe. It was written in Senheim, Germany.

The work is not an attempt to write Indian music. Rather, it is a musical response to experiences which profoundly affected the composer's own imagination, and particularly to the journey along the Ganges from its distant northern source towards Varanasi. The single movement begins in an atmosphere of remoteness and purity, evoking the river far in the north before its long journey through the Indian landscape.

As the symphony progresses, however, the musical world becomes increasingly crowded, fragmented and cumulative. Many of the recurring melodic fragments are derived from Hindu chants which Bullock heard and wrote down during his visit. Rather than being presented as quotations, these remembered fragments are absorbed into the composer's own musical language, where they are repeated, transformed and accumulated. Sitar, tabla and santoor also enter the orchestral texture, sometimes with improvisatory freedom, contributing further layers to an increasingly complex sound-world.

The destination of the journey is Varanasi, whose overwhelming coexistence of life and death, devotion and indifference, compassion and brutality left a particularly powerful impression. Here the music becomes progressively more oppressive, reflecting the sensory and emotional intensity of the city as Bullock experienced it. The final stages of the symphony draw upon a single day in Varanasi, beginning with the cremation of bodies in the morning and moving towards the hypnotic religious ceremonies of the evening.

Throughout the work, the Ganges provides a sense of continuity. Musical ideas emerge, overlap and disappear, while the larger journey continues. The symphony does not seek to resolve the contradictions of the experience. Instead, it allows them to coexist, accumulating until the listener is drawn into the same extraordinary multiplicity that inspired the work.

Ganges is therefore not a portrait of India seen from a distance, but the musical memory of a journey through a country which altered the composer's perception of sound, place and human experience.

Discussion

With *Symphony No. 26,* the symphonic journey enters a new world. The change is not simply geographical. After the Austrian landscapes, the historical journey of *Bricha* and the inward-looking abstraction of Symphony No. 25, *Ganges* represents an encounter with an experience so powerful that it appears to alter the behaviour of the music itself. The work arose from Dafydd Bullock's first extended visit to India in February 2020 and was written after his return to Senheim. It is the first of three symphonies directly inspired by his visits to the country, but it is important from the outset to understand what this does not mean. *Ganges* is not an attempt by a Western composer to write "Indian music", nor is it an exercise in stylistic imitation. The sitar, tabla and santoor are present, and musical fragments derived from chants heard during the journey become increasingly important, but these elements do not replace Bullock's own musical language. India does not provide him with a borrowed style. It changes the nature of his experience, and his own music responds.

The symphony is conceived as a single, continuous journey. Its starting point is the source of the Ganges, far in the north, and its destination is Varanasi. That geographical movement provides the work with a clear underlying direction, but the journey is also psychological. The opening is characterised by a sense of distance, spaciousness and purity. The river is still remote from the overwhelming human density that will eventually surround it. There is an almost elemental quality to the music, a feeling of physical openness in which individual sounds can exist without pressure from competing events.

This purity is not merely a general atmosphere of tranquillity. It represents a particular point of departure. The symphony begins before the accumulated experiences of the journey have entered the music. The world is still spacious enough to be perceived as a whole.

That condition gradually changes. As the work proceeds, the musical texture begins to acquire detail. New colours enter. Fragments emerge and disappear. Rhythmic activity increases, and the relationship between foreground and background becomes progressively less stable. What begins as a relatively unified musical environment slowly becomes a world in which several things can happen simultaneously. This is one of the central processes of the symphony. The journey is not represented through a succession of neatly separated episodes in which one landscape or experience replaces another. Instead, impressions accumulate. A new sound does not necessarily remove the sound that preceded it. Another layer may simply be added.

This principle of accumulation becomes increasingly important as the journey approaches Varanasi. The city, as Bullock experienced it, was not something that could be absorbed through a single perspective. It was dislocated, hallucinatory and overwhelming: a place in which life and death, compassion and indifference, ritual and ordinary existence seemed not merely to alternate but to coexist. The music attempts to find a symphonic equivalent for that condition. It does not organise experience into a sequence in which one event politely follows another. Instead, musical realities begin to overlap. Repetitive figures continue while other fragments interrupt them. Different instrumental groups appear to occupy separate planes. The orchestra becomes increasingly crowded without entirely losing the sense of the larger journey beneath it.

The Ganges itself provides the essential image of continuity. The symphony does not imitate the movement of water through conventional flowing figures, nor is the river simply a picturesque subject. Its deeper significance is structural. Things enter the current, disappear within it and are replaced by other things, but the larger movement continues. The single span of the symphony

makes this particularly important. The listener travels through radically changing musical conditions without ever leaving the same journey.

The recurring melodic fragments derived from Hindu chants are central to this process. Bullock heard these chants during his time in India and most of them were written down in Varanasi itself. Their presence in the symphony therefore arises from remembered experience rather than from an attempt to construct an artificial Indian musical surface. They are not presented as ethnographic quotations, carefully framed and identified. Instead, they have been absorbed into the composer's own musical imagination. Repetition, fragmentation, transformation and accumulation alter their identity until they become inseparable from the larger symphonic fabric.

This is particularly significant because the chants contribute not only melodic material but a different sense of musical behaviour. Their repeated fragments can recur with increasing insistence, disappear into the orchestral texture and subsequently return in altered forms. As the symphony progresses, repetition itself becomes a source of psychological pressure. Material begins to acquire weight simply through its persistence. What may initially have seemed like a passing fragment gradually becomes part of an environment from which it is increasingly difficult to escape.

The Indian instruments function in a related way. Their presence does not announce the arrival of a separate “Indian section”, nor do they take over the symphony and redefine its musical identity. They enter the existing orchestral world as additional voices with their own colours and modes of expression. At times the element of improvisation allows an even greater sense of independence. The result is not stylistic fusion in any superficial sense, but coexistence. Different musical behaviours are allowed to occupy the same space.

That word, coexistence, seems fundamental to an understanding of *Ganges*. The symphony's deepest subject is not contrast in the conventional symphonic sense. It is not simply a matter of stillness followed by activity, darkness followed by light, or one theme opposing another. Its increasingly complex musical world reflects the experience of realities which do not resolve one another. Life continues beside death. Devotion exists beside indifference. Compassion and brutality can occupy the same street, the same riverbank, perhaps the same moment.

Varanasi is the point at which these accumulated impressions become almost impossible to contain. The music grows increasingly dense and oppressive, not simply because it becomes louder or because the orchestration expands, but because the listener has already accumulated so much. Repetitive fragments, rhythmic processes, orchestral colours and remembered musical gestures begin to create an environment rather than a sequence of events. The symphony increasingly surrounds the listener.

This is one of the most striking differences between *Ganges* and the earlier landscape symphonies. In those works, however deeply the music entered its subject, there was generally a sense of the composer contemplating or exploring a landscape. Here that relationship becomes less secure. By the time the journey reaches Varanasi, the observer seems no longer to stand outside the experience. The music is inside the crowd, inside the noise, inside the ritual and inside the accumulating sensory pressure of the city.

The final stages of the symphony give this experience a particularly powerful direction. Bullock's own memories move from the cremation of bodies in the morning towards the great religious ceremonies of the evening. This progression should not be understood as a simple journey from darkness towards light or from death towards transcendence. The relationship is more ambiguous than that. Fire is present at the cremation grounds, confronting death in its most immediate physical form, while later fire becomes part of collective religious ritual. The movement through the day changes the nature of the experience, but it does not remove the earlier reality.

The music accordingly becomes increasingly oppressive. This is not an incidental consequence of orchestral density but a deliberate psychological trajectory. The deeper the symphony enters Varanasi, the more difficult the experience becomes to hold at a comfortable distance. The repeated fragments gain insistence, the accumulation of musical material becomes more intense and the atmosphere increasingly suggests a world in which sensory impressions cannot simply be switched off.

Yet oppression is not the same as rejection. Bullock's response to Varanasi is more complicated than that. The experience is disturbing, but also compelling. It is overwhelming, yet impossible to dismiss. The final religious ceremonies bring an increasingly hypnotic quality to the music, and the word hypnotic is important because it suggests neither conventional beauty nor conventional terror. Repetition can overwhelm while simultaneously drawing the listener further into the experience. The ceremonies do not provide a simple resolution to everything that has preceded them. Rather, they represent the culmination of a process in which repetition, ritual and accumulated sound have become almost inseparable.

The result is a final perspective in which death and life remain present together. This is perhaps the deepest contradiction encountered by the symphony, and it is one which the work wisely refuses to resolve. Varanasi cannot be reduced to a symbol of death, because life is everywhere. Nor can it be idealised as a sacred city of transcendence, because the experience of ordinary human existence remains equally present. The music allows these realities to coexist.

The dedication introduces another, more personal dimension. *Ganges* is dedicated to Harshwardhan Singh Rathore, who showed Bullock his country, and also to Ollie, who was born shortly after the composer's return from India. Once again, there is no need to invent a literal programme around that dedication or search for a musical portrait of the child. Yet the coincidence has an undeniable emotional resonance. A symphony profoundly shaped by a place where death is encountered openly and publicly is dedicated also to a new life arriving immediately afterwards within the composer's own family.

The connection need not be made explicit within the musical material to be significant. It changes the horizon from which the whole experience is remembered. The great opposition of life and death is no longer only something witnessed in India. On returning home, the arrival of a new child gives that experience an immediate personal counterpoint.

This helps explain why the symphony is more than a travelogue and more than an impression of a foreign country. The journey to India provided the experience, but the experience was transformed through memory into music. What remains is not a catalogue of places visited, sounds heard or events observed. It is a cumulative reconstruction of what it felt like for the composer's imagination to be subjected to an environment of extraordinary multiplicity.

That multiplicity is the symphony's great formal achievement. The music repeatedly threatens to fragment into separate worlds, yet the single movement holds everything within one continuous span. Fragments derived from chant coexist with Bullock's own melodic and harmonic language. Improvisatory elements appear within a carefully constructed symphonic argument. Individual instrumental voices emerge from large orchestral accumulations. The music becomes increasingly crowded, yet the underlying journey continues.

The Ganges therefore functions as more than a subject. It becomes the symphony's governing principle. From the distant northern source to the sacred city, the river carries everything along its course. The landscape changes, human presence increases and the accumulated experiences of civilisation become ever more intense, but the continuity remains.

For this reason, the deepest movement of *Ganges* is perhaps from purity towards multiplicity. The opening presents a world that can still be perceived in relative clarity. By the end, clarity has become impossible. Too much has been seen, heard and absorbed. The music has become saturated by experience.

And that, perhaps, is why *Symphony No. 26* marks such an important moment in the larger symphonic journey. The earlier works had already shown Bullock's ability to transform places, histories and personal experiences into musical structures. *Ganges* goes further. The encounter with India does not simply provide a new subject for an existing method. It appears to change the compositional response itself. The music becomes more layered, more simultaneous, more cumulative and more psychologically unstable. India is not represented through an adopted musical language - it is encountered, remembered and absorbed.

The result is a symphony that begins with the remote purity of a river's source and ends within one of the most overwhelming human environments imaginable. Along the way, musical fragments gather like memories. Chants heard and written down during the journey become part of an increasingly insistent musical fabric. Instruments associated with Indian musical traditions enter the orchestra without displacing its identity. Repetition becomes ritual, ritual becomes pressure, and pressure gradually acquires a hypnotic force.

The journey does not lead towards a simple revelation or a comfortable transcendence. It leads towards experience itself: an experience so dense, contradictory and powerful that it eventually seems almost too much to contain within a single perspective. Yet the symphony contains it. That is its achievement. The Ganges flows from purity towards multiplicity, and the music follows it all the way.

Symphony No. 27 Op. 305

For New Life

Programme Note

Symphony No. 27, For New Life, was written in Senheim, Germany, during the nine months preceding the birth of the composer's granddaughter, Evelyn, and is dedicated to her as a musical "Welcome to the World".

The work grew directly from the ultra-sound recordings made during the pregnancy. At each stage, Dafydd Bullock listened to Evelyn's heartbeat and used its changing speed and rhythmic character as a starting point for the music. The resulting symphony consists of six cumulative movements, following the gradual development of a new life from its first audible presence to the increasingly powerful anticipation of birth.

The **opening movement** begins with the rapid, tapping pulse heard at the first scan at six weeks, while the **second** responds to the unpredictable rhythmic energy and movement apparent at thirteen weeks. The **third movement** turns inward, becoming a calm meditation on the invisible construction of life itself, while the **fourth** celebrates its growing power and energy at sixteen weeks. At twenty weeks comes the **fifth**, *Serenissima*, an almost celestial movement inspired by the sight of Evelyn's head at rest. The **final movement** gathers the preceding experience into a larger and increasingly dramatic symphonic conclusion.

Yet Evelyn is not the only presence within the work. Material associated with her mother is derived from a lullaby which Bullock wrote on the night of her own birth and which returns throughout the symphony, creating a direct musical connection between two generations. Evelyn's father, meanwhile, is represented through elements of Welsh musical tradition, including *Calon Lân*, *Hyfrydol* and *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*. The symphony is therefore cumulative in more than one sense. As Evelyn develops, the music develops with her, but it also gathers together memories, family relationships and musical inheritances. A lullaby written for a newborn daughter returns to welcome that daughter's child; Welsh hymns and national song acknowledge the cultural inheritance of Evelyn's father; earlier music is given a new meaning within a new family context.

For New Life is ultimately a symphony of anticipation. It was written for someone who could already be heard and increasingly seen, but whom the composer had not yet met. Before Evelyn entered the world, the music was already waiting for her.

Discussion

There are many musical works inspired by birth, childhood and family, but *Symphony No. 27* occupies a rather unusual position among them. It was not written to celebrate a child who had already arrived, nor is it a retrospective recollection of infancy. *For New Life* was composed during the months preceding the birth of Dafydd Bullock's granddaughter, Evelyn. Its subject was therefore present and absent at the same time: a person whose existence could be heard and gradually seen, but whose voice, character and future remained unknown. That condition of anticipation lies at the heart of the symphony.

Bullock's starting point was both intimate and remarkably concrete. During the pregnancy, recordings were made of Evelyn's heartbeat at successive scans, and the changing speed and rhythm of those recordings became part of the musical process. The first movement grows from the rapid, insistent pulse heard at six weeks; later movements respond to the changing physical evidence of the developing child, from unpredictable movement to increasingly visible form and, eventually, the extraordinary anticipation of her arrival. The score itself identifies the opening with the newly heard heartbeat and presents the symphony explicitly as being for Evelyn and her parents.

This immediately distinguishes *For New Life* from a conventional musical portrait. The symphony does not begin by imagining what Evelyn might be like. It begins with the simplest possible evidence that she exists: a heartbeat. The **opening movement** is therefore not a lullaby. It is urgent, rapid and active. The pulse does not appear as an occasional symbolic gesture but becomes the source of a larger musical organism. Small rhythmic figures are repeated, transferred through the orchestra and allowed to generate increasingly complex activity. The music behaves rather like the subject that inspired it: something initially tiny begins to expand beyond its original dimensions.

A heartbeat is, in itself, an extremely simple event, yet from this small rhythmic impulse Bullock creates an entire symphonic movement. A pulse becomes a pattern, the pattern becomes movement, and movement gradually acquires an orchestral world of its own. The musical process therefore mirrors the subject without attempting literal illustration. Life enters the symphony not through sentimentality, but through energy.

The **second movement** takes the process a stage further. By thirteen weeks, the heartbeat is faster, while the developing child is already moving unpredictably and energetically, a condition directly reflected in the movement's changing rhythmic behaviour. The music becomes more volatile, agile and less predictable. Rhythmic gestures appear, interrupt one another and move rapidly through the orchestral texture.

The distinction between the first two movements is subtle but important. The first establishes existence through pulse, while the second begins to suggest individuality through behaviour. The symphony does not, of course, claim that an unborn child can already be understood as a fully formed personality. The delight lies rather in the discovery of unpredictability itself. Something is happening within this new life which cannot be controlled or anticipated. The unknown person begins, as it were, to answer back, not through words but through movement.

The **third movement** represents one of the most remarkable changes in the entire symphony. After the physical urgency of the first two movements, the music turns towards something almost invisible. The score describes the slowly evolving material as representing "*the slow steady construction of the ordered hierarchies of living cells"*, adding simply, *"A miracle!"*

The change is profound. The rapid activity of the opening movements gives way to sustained lines and a much slower sense of time. Yet this is not inactivity. On the contrary, the movement is concerned with processes of unimaginable complexity. While little may be visible externally, life is becoming increasingly organised. Cells divide, structures emerge and relationships are formed.

Bullock's response is not scientific illustration. He does not attempt to turn biology into a musical diagram. Instead, he finds a musical equivalent for the underlying principle of gradual construction. The movement unfolds through continuity, order and patient growth. The result is contemplative, but its contemplation is directed towards activity too profound and complex to be directly witnessed. After the urgency and unpredictability of the earlier movements, the symphony pauses in wonder before the invisible processes through which life is being formed.

The **fourth movement** brings another decisive transformation. At sixteen weeks comes what the score describes as *"the boiling power of Life, strengthening by the day"*, followed by the delightfully irreverent suggestion, *"Mozart, overheard from within?"* The humour of that remark is important because it prevents the symphony from becoming solemnly reverential. The developing child may indeed be a miracle, but she is also becoming increasingly energetic. The music acquires a new confidence and buoyancy. What had previously been heard, observed and contemplated now begins to assert itself.

The sequence of the first four movements consequently forms a remarkably coherent developmental arc. At first, Evelyn is simply there, identified through the astonishing discovery of a heartbeat. Then she moves. The symphony subsequently turns towards the invisible processes by which such life is constructed, before celebrating its growing power and energy. Yet Bullock described the symphony as consisting of six cumulative movements, and that word is fundamental. The movements do not simply replace one another. The earlier stages remain implicit within the later ones. The heartbeat continues to matter after movement has become visible; movement remains part of the developing life even when the symphony turns towards contemplation; the invisible processes of construction continue beneath the increasingly energetic external evidence. The symphony grows because nothing is discarded.

This cumulative principle, however, extends far beyond Evelyn's biological development. The deeper one looks into the work, the more apparent it becomes that the unborn child is already surrounded by musical memories and inheritances.

The material associated with Evelyn's mother provides perhaps the most touching example. It derives from a lullaby which Bullock wrote on the night that she herself was born. That music reappears throughout *Symphony No. 27*, written years later before the birth of her own daughter. This creates an extraordinary continuity across generations. A newborn child inspired a lullaby; that child grew up; then the lullaby returned to become part of a symphony welcoming her own child into the world.

The maternal material is therefore far more than a convenient theme representing the mother. It carries history within it. The music remembers her mother before Evelyn exists as an independent person in the world. Her presence within the symphony is not simply biological or familial; it is also a form of musical memory. The lullaby has, in a sense, travelled through her own life and returned at the moment when she herself is about to become a mother. It now becomes part of the musical world waiting to receive Evelyn.

The material associated with Evelyn's father enters from an entirely different direction. Because he is Welsh, his presence brings into the symphony elements of *Calon Lân*, *Hyfrydol* and *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*. These references acknowledge a cultural inheritance which will also form part of Evelyn's identity.

Here again, however, the musical history is more complicated than simple quotation. Part of the material derived from *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* had previously appeared in *Hafod Eryri*, a larger fanfare written for the reopening of the Snowdon Summit building. Music associated with *Yr Wyddfa* is therefore given a new and intensely personal context within the symphony. The Welsh inheritance represented through Evelyn's father is consequently joined to another strand of the composer's own creative history.

The child at the centre of the work is thus surrounded by several different forms of musical identity. Her own existence is represented through the immediate evidence of her heartbeat and physical development. Her mother is present through an intimate musical memory written at the moment of her own birth. Her father is represented through the Welsh musical inheritance from which he comes. All of this is contained within the accumulated history of Bullock's own life as a composer, as earlier material acquires a new meaning in a new family context.

The symphony is therefore cumulative not merely because six movements chart successive stages of pregnancy. It accumulates family, memory, place and time.

The **fifth movement,** *Serenissima*, marks another profound change in the relationship between composer and subject. By twenty weeks, the musical response is no longer principally concerned with what can be heard. The inspiration is visual, inspired by a further scan: the exquisite curve of Evelyn's head at rest, which gives rise to an almost celestial world of sustained lyricism and contemplation.

There is a beautiful progression here. The symphony begins by listening to Evelyn. Later it responds to her movement. It then contemplates the invisible miracle of her construction and celebrates her growing physical power. By *Serenissima*, the composer simply looks, and the music rests with what it sees.

The title itself acquires an intriguing resonance within Bullock's larger symphonic world. *Serenissima* had previously belonged to Venice, with all its associations of history, beauty, water and architectural splendour. Here the word is transformed. The “Most Serene” is no longer a city but an unborn child in repose. That transformation seems emblematic of the whole symphony. The grand scale of history and geography has given way to an intensely private human experience, yet the musical response remains fully symphonic. The significance of one developing life is sufficient to sustain an entire orchestral world.

By the **final movement,** the accumulated processes of the symphony are ready to converge. The finale begins with renewed orchestral force and a broad sense of dramatic purpose. Its epic quality, however, does not arise simply from size, volume or orchestral brilliance. The movement is epic because of everything that now stands behind it. Evelyn's own developing life has been followed from its first audible pulse. The mother’s birth has returned in the form of the lullaby written for her. Evelyn's father brings the musical inheritance of Wales. *Calon Lân*, *Hyfrydol* and *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* introduce cultural memory, while *Hafod Eryri* brings material from an earlier stage of the composer's life into this new family context. Behind everything stands the grandfather, writing a symphony for someone he has not yet met.

The arrival of a new person is therefore understood not as the beginning of something isolated from the past, but as the meeting point of many histories. This may be the deepest meaning of *For New Life*. New life is new, of course. Evelyn is not a continuation of her mother, her father or her grandfather. She will become herself. Yet no human being arrives in an empty space. Before birth there are already relationships, histories, languages, places, memories and expectations surrounding the person who is coming. Bullock gives that reality a musical form.

The symphony begins with Evelyn's own pulse, the most immediate evidence of her individual existence. But as the work expands, that pulse enters an increasingly rich environment of inherited and remembered material. By the end, the individual heartbeat has become the centre around which a much larger world gathers.

This makes the symphony's emotional perspective especially unusual. Evelyn is the subject of the work, yet she remains unknowable. The composer can hear her heartbeat and later see something of her developing form, but he cannot yet know the person she will become. The music is therefore an act of anticipation, written towards someone who already exists but still belongs, in a profound sense, to the future. The “Welcome to the World” is prepared before the guest has arrived.

Each movement adds another piece of knowledge, another glimpse and another response to the developing life. The heartbeat becomes movement; movement becomes visible form; the child becomes increasingly imaginable. Yet even at the end, the mystery remains. The symphony can welcome Evelyn, but it cannot predict her. That restraint is one of its great strengths. *For New Life* does not attempt to invent the personality of the unborn child or tell the story of the life that awaits her. Instead, it celebrates the extraordinary condition of waiting: the gradual recognition that someone is coming, the increasing evidence of that person's existence, and the simultaneous accumulation of excitement, memory and love around an individual who has not yet entered the world.

In this sense, the symphony has a quietly profound relationship with time. The mother’s past returns through the lullaby written on the night of her birth. The father's inheritance reaches back through Welsh song and hymnody. Earlier compositions are drawn into the present and given new meaning. Meanwhile, the entire symphony looks forward towards Evelyn's future. Past, present and future coexist: the past is remembered, the present is listened to, and the future is awaited.

Symphony No. 27 therefore occupies a remarkable place in the larger sequence of Bullock's symphonies. After the overwhelming coexistence of life and death in *Ganges*, the subject of life becomes intensely focused and personal. The immense multiplicity of Varanasi gives way to one heartbeat, yet the principle of accumulation continues. In *Ganges*, sounds, chants, rituals, memories and contradictory experiences gathered into an increasingly overwhelming symphonic world. In *For New Life*, accumulation becomes organic. A heartbeat gathers movement; movement gathers complexity; complexity gathers power; and a new life gathers around itself the memories and inheritances of the world into which it is about to arrive.

Perhaps the most moving aspect of the symphony is also the simplest. Evelyn could not yet hear it as the work was being composed. She did not know that the rapid rhythms of its opening had begun with her own heartbeat, or that her mother's earliest musical memory and her father's Welsh inheritance were already becoming part of the musical world surrounding her. She had not yet entered the world, but her symphony was already there, waiting.

Symphony No. 28 Op. 313

Y Fflam

Programme Note

Symphony No. 28, *Y Fflam – The Flame*, composed in Senheim, Germany in May 2021, is a compact three-movement work for string orchestra in which the idea of flame becomes a source of musical transformation. Rather than offering a descriptive portrait of fire, the symphony explores different states of energy: flickering movement, glowing stillness, gathering force and elemental release.

The **opening movement** begins with small, active figures which pass restlessly through the string orchestra, changing register, density and character as they develop. The music grows through continual transformation rather than conventional repetition, its material spreading through the ensemble and repeatedly changing shape, like flame itself.

The **central** *Adagietto* offers a complete contrast. Here the restless activity of the opening is transformed into sustained, luminous sound. Long melodic lines emerge from broad string sonorities, creating a sense of inwardness and concentrated warmth. The music is slow and contemplative, but beneath its stillness lies an intense inner life.

The **finale** releases the accumulated energy of the preceding movements. Its more physical rhythmic momentum and increasing orchestral weight bring together the restless motion of the first movement and the sustained power of the second. The string orchestra expands into a force of considerable dramatic intensity before the symphony finally reaches a state of broad, elemental stillness. It opens tragically and despite increased forward motion remains so. Towards the end a short major passage, taken from an earlier work (the symphonic poem *'Y Chwarel - The Quarry'*) passes in and out of the ongoing activity, offering moments of lightness and consolation. The music winds down to a close, but still leaving an unresolved feeling.

Y Fflam is therefore not simply a musical depiction of fire. Its three movements trace a process in which energy continually changes its form. The flame flickers, glows, gathers strength and finally becomes something larger than itself: an elemental symbol of movement, transformation and enduring power.

Discussion

After the intensely personal world of *Symphony No. 27, For New Life*, *Symphony No. 28* presents a striking change of scale and subject. The focus is no longer upon a particular human life, a family history or the gradual anticipation of birth. Instead, *Y Fflam – The Flame* turns towards something elemental. Its subject is not fire in any narrowly descriptive sense, but the changing behaviour of energy itself: its movement, concentration, transformation and release.

The choice of the string orchestra is central to the character of the work. After the broad orchestral palette of some of the preceding symphonies, the restriction to five-part strings creates an unusual degree of concentration. Every change of register, articulation and texture becomes significant. There is nowhere for the music to conceal itself behind orchestral colour; instead, colour must be created from within the medium itself, through the interaction of the string voices and the constantly changing density of the musical argument.

The **first movement** begins with compact, active material which immediately establishes a sense of restlessness. The music does not unfold as a broad melody supported by accompaniment. Instead, small figures circulate through the ensemble, passing from one register to another and continually altering their relationship to the surrounding texture. The impression is of something alive and constantly changing, and the association with flame is immediately persuasive. Fire has no permanent shape. It flickers, contracts, spreads and changes direction from moment to moment, and the musical material behaves in a comparable manner.

This does not mean that the movement is pictorial in any simple sense. Bullock does not attempt to imitate the sound or appearance of a flame. Rather, he takes its principle of continual transformation and makes it structural. Material rarely remains in one state for long. It spreads through the body of the string orchestra, gathers force, fragments, reappears at a different pitch level and acquires a new character through redistribution among the instruments. The movement grows through metamorphosis.

The succession of contrasting sections is therefore best understood not as a sequence of separate episodes but as a continuing process of change. More vigorous passages emerge from the earlier material, broader and weightier textures interrupt the more mobile writing, and moments of withdrawal create space before the energy begins to gather again. The music does not abandon one idea in favour of another. It changes state.

One of the most striking aspects of the movement is the relationship between collective force and individual activity. At times, the entire string orchestra acquires considerable weight, creating a sonority far larger than the relatively restricted medium might suggest. At other moments, the texture opens and individual lines emerge with greater clarity. The effect resembles the changing behaviour of flame itself, which can appear both as a single powerful blaze and as a collection of countless separate flickers. The first movement continually moves between these two conditions.

The **central** *Adagietto* transforms the symphony's world completely. Marked by a very slow tempo and broad sustained sonorities, it replaces the restless activity of the opening with a sense of concentrated stillness. Yet this stillness is not equivalent to inactivity. Beneath the long melodic lines and sustained harmonies there remains an intense inner life. The energy which in the first movement was visible in constant motion has now been drawn inward.

This is where the title *Y Fflam* acquires a deeper significance. The first movement might suggest the visible movement of fire, its flickering and continual instability, but the *Adagietto* explores another

aspect of the same image. The flame becomes a source of warmth and light. It glows rather than flickers. The slower pace allows harmonic change itself to become expressive, and the gradual emergence of individual lines from the larger texture creates a sense of something luminous unfolding within an otherwise concentrated sound-world.

The movement's lyricism is particularly important because it prevents the symphony's conception of energy from becoming exclusively rhythmic or physical. Fire is not represented only as activity and force. It also possesses an inward, almost contemplative dimension. The sustained string writing allows the music to expand in long spans, and the contrast with the opening movement creates the impression that the same energy has undergone a profound transformation.

The *Adagietto* consequently becomes more than a conventional slow movement placed between two faster outer movements. It acts as a central point of transformation. The restless energy of the opening is slowed down and deepened. Its constant movement becomes sustained intensity. The changing colours of the string orchestra become less dependent upon rapid redistribution and more dependent upon harmonic breadth, register and the gradual emergence of melodic lines.

The later stages of the movement become increasingly restrained, with muted strings contributing to a further withdrawal of colour and intensity. This does not suggest extinction. Rather, the energy of the flame appears to have become concentrated within itself. The fire has not disappeared; it has entered a state in which its power is felt through containment rather than movement.

The **finale** releases that contained energy with immediate force. A new rhythmic character establishes a much more physical sense of propulsion, and the string orchestra rapidly expands into a more assertive and dramatic world. Yet the finale is not simply a return to the restless activity of the opening movement. The energy now possesses greater weight and assurance. The experience of the central *Adagietto* has changed the character of what follows.

This is one of the most convincing aspects of the symphony's three-movement design. The outer movements may both be energetic, but the central movement ensures that they are not simply reflections of one another. The first explores movement and transformation at the level of small, active musical cells. The *Adagietto* broadens and deepens that energy, drawing it inward and allowing it to become luminous and sustained. The finale then brings these two conditions together. It possesses the mobility of the first movement but also the greater weight and breadth acquired through the central transformation.

The internal architecture of the finale is correspondingly elaborate. Rapidly articulated passages alternate with more massive sustained gestures, individual instruments emerge from the collective texture and are subsequently absorbed back into it, while repeated rhythmic figures create an increasingly powerful sense of accumulation. The music repeatedly changes its state, just as it did in the opening movement, but now the changes occur within a broader dramatic framework.

The command of orchestral weight throughout the finale is especially impressive. With strings alone, Bullock creates moments of considerable mass through register, spacing and rhythmic unanimity. Yet this collective force is never allowed to become permanent. It fragments, redistributes itself and returns in altered forms. The string orchestra can become a single powerful body, only for that unity to dissolve again into separate lines and gestures. The image of flame remains appropriate, but the music has moved beyond simple pictorial association. The changing relationship between individual and collective energy has become part of the symphony's structural argument.

As the finale progresses, the sense of accumulation becomes increasingly powerful. Repeated rhythmic figures and increasingly collective sonorities create a force which is almost elemental in

character. Yet the symphony's conclusion avoids the obvious solution of ending in a final frenzy. After the accumulated activity and force, the music begins to simplify. Broad sustained sonorities return, the ensemble regroups and the final texture acquires an unexpected spaciousness.

This ending seems essential to the meaning of the whole work. The flame has passed through a series of transformations: restless movement, concentrated stillness, renewed physical force and increasing collective intensity. It does not simply burn itself out. Instead, the symphony arrives at a state of elemental stillness in which movement has been replaced by presence.

The three movements of *Y Fflam* therefore form a remarkably coherent process. The first presents energy as mobile and constantly changing shape. The second draws that energy inward, transforming movement into sustained luminosity. The finale reunites movement and weight, flicker and blaze, individual gesture and collective force, before allowing the entire process to settle into a final state of spacious concentration.

Seen in this way, the symphony is not really about fire as spectacle. Fire provides the image, but the deeper subject is transformation. Energy does not disappear when its outward form changes. It moves between different states, becoming restless, luminous, powerful or still while retaining an underlying continuity.

That idea gives *Symphony No. 28* an important position within the wider sequence. After *Ganges*, with its overwhelming accumulation of experience, and *For New Life*, in which biological development and family memory gradually gather into a single musical identity, *Y Fflam* removes explicit narrative almost completely. Yet the principle of development remains. Once again, the music is concerned with something that grows through accumulation and transformation. Here, however, the process has been reduced to its most elemental form.

After the immense human multiplicity of Varanasi and the intimate discovery of one unborn heartbeat, comes the flame. It is a striking transition, but not an arbitrary one. Both of the preceding symphonies were concerned, in very different ways, with life and its processes. *Y Fflam* moves one stage further back, towards energy itself: the force that flickers, gathers, transforms and persists.

For all its concentration, *Symphony No. 28* is not a small work. Its restricted forces create a heightened intensity, and the string orchestra is made to assume a remarkable variety of identities. It can flicker with rapid individual activity, glow with sustained lyricism, gather into great blocks of collective sound and finally withdraw into spacious stillness. The apparent limitation of the medium becomes one of the work's greatest strengths, because every transformation must emerge from the same five-part body.

The result is a symphony of unusual economy and clarity. Nothing in it feels merely decorative. The changing textures, rhythmic energies and sonorities all contribute to the central idea of transformation. The flame is never represented as a fixed object because its essential quality is that it cannot remain fixed.

That may be the deepest and most persuasive idea behind the work. *Y Fflam* is ultimately a symphony about energy discovering different forms of itself. It flickers, glows, gathers strength, expands into elemental force and finally reaches a state in which the outward movement has ceased but the presence remains. After the intensely personal anticipation of *For New Life*, this return to the elemental feels both unexpected and entirely convincing. The subject has changed, the forces have been reduced and the human narrative has disappeared, but the symphonic journey continues to explore one of its most persistent concerns: the transformation of experience into music, and the transformation of music itself as it moves from one state of being to another.

Symphony No. 29 Op. 317

Salzburg

Programme Note

There are certain numbers in music which carry their own associations, and *Symphony No. 29* is inevitably one of them. Mozart's *Symphony No. 29* in A major is one of his most beloved and distinctive symphonic works, and so Dafydd Bullock's own *Symphony No. 29* could, as he puts it, *"only be in A major"* and perhaps should inevitably bear the title *Salzburg*. It was written in Hinterthal, Austria, in August 2021.

The **first movement** begins with unmistakable musical memories of Mozart's *Symphony No. 29*. Fragments of its opening movement appear almost as quotations, though never quite becoming literal reproductions. Mozart is therefore not simply an influence or distant historical presence, but the point from which Bullock's own symphonic journey begins. Familiar gestures are heard through a different musical imagination, suggesting a conversation with the earlier symphony rather than an attempt to recreate it.

From this fresh and light-hearted beginning, however, the musical world gradually changes. The classical proportions and elegance of the opening begin to expand into something broader and increasingly Romantic. The second movement opens out into a more spacious world, while the energetic third movement brings a growing physicality and elemental force. By the finale, the landscape itself seems to have transformed the music.

For Bullock, Salzburg is inseparable from the extraordinary mountains surrounding it, and these increasingly dictate the symphony's widening scale and emotional character. The deliberate evocations of Bruckner which emerge during the later stages of the work acknowledge another great Austrian musical presence. Mozart provides the point of departure, but the symphony eventually enters a world of breadth, resonance and elemental grandeur closer to Bruckner's imagination.

The four movements of *Salzburg* therefore trace a journey through both landscape and musical history. The symphony begins by walking briefly beside Mozart, then gradually moves away from the classical world into increasingly Romantic and expansive territory. Mozart opens the journey; the Austrian mountains determine where it will go.

Discussion

There are certain symphonic numbers that arrive carrying considerable historical baggage. A composer writing a Ninth Symphony is unlikely to be entirely unaware of Beethoven, Bruckner or Mahler, whether or not their presence is consciously invited. Symphony No. 29 presents a rather different challenge. Mozart's *Symphony No. 29* in A major is not simply an important work sharing the same number. It is one of those pieces whose identity is so immediate and distinctive that the conjunction of number and key creates an almost irresistible association.

Dafydd Bullock's response to this is characteristically direct. If this is *Symphony No. 29,* then it will be in A major. If Mozart's shadow is unavoidable, there is little point in pretending otherwise. The symphony is therefore called *Salzburg*, and the opening movement begins by acknowledging Mozart with a degree of openness that is both affectionate and mischievous.

The Mozartian presence is not merely stylistic. At the beginning of the first movement, Bullock introduces fragments that come extremely close to quotation from the opening movement of Mozart's *Symphony No. 29*. The resemblance is unmistakable, particularly for listeners who know Mozart's work well, but the material is never simply reproduced. It is remembered, altered and absorbed into a different musical language. The effect is rather like hearing a familiar voice speaking through another person's imagination.

This distinction between quotation and almost-quotation is important. A literal quotation would place Mozart's music momentarily inside Bullock's symphony as an identifiable object. Here the relationship is more fluid. Mozart's material seems already to belong to the musical consciousness from which Bullock's symphony begins. The opening does not stop in order to salute its predecessor; it moves forward from within its memory.

The result is a beginning of considerable freshness and charm. The lightness of gesture, the clarity of the orchestral writing and the elegant energy of the musical material establish a deliberately Classical world. The forces themselves contribute to this impression, with the orchestra maintaining a scale and transparency appropriate to the initial Mozartian reference. Yet almost immediately, the music begins to reveal the characteristics that belong unmistakably to Bullock. Small musical cells circulate, accumulate and undergo transformation, and the apparently familiar gestures begin to move in directions which Mozart himself would never have taken.

The **first movement** is therefore not a pastiche and certainly not an attempt to write a twenty-first-century companion piece in Mozart's style. The Classical inheritance provides a starting point, but the symphony is interested in what happens when that inheritance begins to expand beyond its original proportions. The Mozartian fragments are gradually absorbed into a broader and increasingly personal musical argument.

This process takes place organically. The music does not suddenly announce that it is leaving Mozart behind. Instead, the balance slowly changes. Orchestral gestures broaden, harmonic spaces become more expansive and the weight of the music increasingly exceeds the elegant proportions with which the symphony began. By its later stages, the argument has acquired a strength and amplitude that point clearly towards a different historical and emotional world.

What makes this transformation convincing is that the later Romanticism appears to grow from the earlier Classical material. The opening has not been discarded. It has expanded, acquired weight and discovered possibilities that were already latent within its musical energy. The journey is

therefore not Mozart followed by Romanticism as a simple succession of historical styles. Rather, the music seems gradually to outgrow the proportions of the world in which it began.

The **second movement** represents an important stage in that expansion. Moving at an extremely broad pace, it immediately establishes a new relationship with time. The freshness and animation of the opening movement give way to longer spans, sustained sonorities and a much greater sense of space. The orchestra seems to breathe differently.

It is here that *Salzburg* begins to become more than a title. Mozart is everywhere in the imaginative identity of the city, but Salzburg is also defined by its physical environment. The mountains surrounding it alter one's sense of scale. However elegant and ordered the architecture of the city itself may appear, the landscape beyond it introduces another dimension: something larger, older and considerably less susceptible to Classical proportion.

The second movement seems to respond to that widening of perspective. Its long melodic spans and broad harmonic spaces create the impression that the horizon has opened. The music no longer moves through a world defined principally by elegance and clarity. It begins to inhabit space. The gradual exchange of material between winds and strings and the increasing amplitude of the orchestral writing allow the landscape to enter the symphony without the need for literal pictorialism.

This is not merely a conventional slow movement offering repose between more energetic outer sections. It is a transformation of scale. The first movement has established a musical world in which Mozart is a recognisable presence; the second begins to show that the landscape surrounding Salzburg may eventually prove too large for that world to contain.

The **third movement** accelerates this process. Its vigorous compound metre introduces an energetic and increasingly physical motion which immediately distances it from the poised Classical atmosphere of the opening. The music possesses something of the energy of a scherzo, but it is no polite eighteenth-century dance. Repeated patterns, shifting orchestral groups and increasingly powerful accumulation create a rougher, more elemental world.

At this point, one begins to feel that the initial Mozartian journey has carried the symphony beyond the city and into the surrounding landscape. The various instrumental groups behave less as colours arranged within a finely balanced Classical ensemble and increasingly as forces within a larger symphonic terrain. The music becomes more physical, more expansive and increasingly resistant to containment.

It is also here that the deliberate Brucknerian evocations begin to acquire their full significance. Bruckner's presence in an Austrian symphony of this kind is not accidental, but neither is it simply a matter of imitation. Bullock has no interest in reconstructing Bruckner's harmonic language or reproducing his formal procedures. The reference is to something more fundamental: the breadth of gesture, the resonance of accumulated sound and the sense that musical scale can respond directly to the physical grandeur of the landscape.

There is also a characteristic honesty in Bullock's own acknowledgement that Bruckner *"got it right — and did it better"*. The humour does not diminish the seriousness of the tribute. On the contrary, it clarifies the nature of the relationship. The Brucknerian moments are deliberate acts of recognition. They acknowledge that certain kinds of musical response to the Austrian landscape have already found one of their most powerful expressions in Bruckner's music.

What is particularly fascinating about *Symphony No. 29* is that it places Mozart and Bruckner at opposite ends of a single journey. Mozart represents clarity, proportion, elegance and lightness.

Bruckner represents breadth, resonance, accumulated weight and elemental scale. The symphony begins beside one and gradually moves towards the other.

The **final movement** completes that transformation. Its broad opening immediately establishes a scale very different from the beginning of the symphony. We remain in the same work, in the same key and within the same imaginative geography, but the dimensions of the musical world have changed. The Classical proportions of the opening have been stretched and expanded until a different kind of symphonic landscape has emerged.

This is the point at which Bullock's comment that *"the wonderful mountains dictate"* the increasingly Romantic and elemental character of the music becomes central to an understanding of the whole work. The symphony does not simply decide, in an abstract musical sense, to become more Romantic. The landscape itself becomes part of the imaginative process. As the music moves further from its Mozartian point of departure, the scale of the Austrian environment begins to exert an increasing pressure upon its form and character.

The four movements consequently create a remarkably coherent progression. The first establishes freshness, elegance and a consciously Mozartian relationship with Classical tradition. The second expands both time and space, allowing the music to discover a broader horizon. The third releases a new physical and rhythmic energy, transforming the symphonic landscape into something rougher and more elemental. The finale brings breadth and weight fully into the foreground, allowing the symphony to arrive in the monumental territory towards which it has gradually been travelling.

The work is therefore much more than a collection of affectionate references to two great Austrian composers. Mozart and Bruckner represent different possibilities within the symphony's imaginative geography. One is associated with lightness, proportion and movement; the other with mass, resonance and the grandeur of accumulated sound. The journey between them is also a journey between city and landscape, between the human scale of Salzburg and the mountains which surround it.

Perhaps the most elegant aspect of the whole conception is that the two worlds are never treated as fundamentally incompatible. The symphony does not reject Mozart in order to become Romantic. Instead, the Romantic and elemental dimensions of the later movements seem to grow gradually from the same Austrian ground. Mozart remains part of the symphony's memory even when the music has travelled far beyond the proportions of its opening.

This gives the almost-quotations at the beginning a deeper structural significance. Mozart is not simply a guest who appears at the start of the work. His presence establishes the point from which everything else will develop. The fragments of *Symphony No. 29* are the first steps of a journey which eventually carries the music into a radically different world.

The number itself adds a further layer of humour to the work. There is no attempt to avoid the comparison with Mozart or to pretend that it has not occurred to the composer. Quite the opposite. The title and key deliberately invite the listener to make the association. There is something wonderfully audacious about the premise: a *Symphony No. 29* in A major, called *Salzburg*, opening with material that unmistakably remembers Mozart's own *Symphony No. 29*.

But the real achievement of the work lies in what happens next. Having deliberately placed Mozart at the point of departure, Bullock refuses to remain there. The opening is affectionate, witty and unmistakably conscious of its historical association, but it is not an act of stylistic submission. Mozart is the beginning of the journey, not its destination. The Austrian landscape ultimately takes control. By the end of the symphony, the listener has travelled from the almost-quotation of Mozart's light, energetic opening into a world of increasing Romantic breadth and elemental force.

The journey is not merely historical, moving from the eighteenth century towards the nineteenth. It is geographical and imaginative. The city gradually gives way to the landscape surrounding it.

Symphony No. 29, Salzburg, can therefore be heard as a conversation across Austrian musical history, but it is also a journey through a place as experienced through that history. Mozart opens the door. For a while, the symphony walks beside him. Then the road leads outward, the horizon widens, the mountains begin to dominate the view and another Austrian presence becomes increasingly difficult to ignore.

By the end, Mozart has not disappeared. He remains at the beginning of everything that has followed. But the symphony has discovered that Salzburg is surrounded by mountains, and once those mountains have entered the music, they have the final word.

Symphony No. 30 Op. 323

The Darkling Light

Programme Note

Written in Senheim, Germany, at the end of December 2021, *Symphony No. 30*, *The Darkling Light*, is a short but intense single-movement work for string orchestra. It reflects the increasingly dark mood of a world facing several simultaneous crises: the continuing health emergency, the growing reality of climate change and the gathering threat of war between Russia and Ukraine. The work does not attempt to describe these events individually. Instead, it responds to the atmosphere they created: uncertainty, isolation, tension and the sense of a future becoming increasingly difficult to imagine.

The symphony begins with a single exposed voice. Gradually, the other instruments enter, forming connections and temporary moments of collective strength before the texture repeatedly fragments and withdraws. Activity gathers, tension increases and the string orchestra acquires considerable intensity, yet the music resists any simple progression towards triumph or catastrophe.

The title contains the central paradox of the work. The light is present, but it is threatened and darkening; the darkness itself is never absolute. After the work's periods of tension and accumulation, the music finally withdraws into an extraordinary fragility.

There is no victory at the end of *The Darkling Light*, but neither is there complete extinction. What remains is something quieter and more uncertain: a sense of endurance.

Discussion

Symphony No. 30 stands at a striking point in Dafydd Bullock's symphonic journey. After the expansive historical imagination of *Salzburg*, with its affectionate encounter with Mozart and its gradual movement towards the monumental presence of the Austrian mountains and Bruckner, the world suddenly contracts. The larger orchestra disappears. The historical conversation falls silent. There are no mountains, no great inherited traditions and no external landscape. Instead, the symphony is written for five string voices, and from its opening moments the music possesses a sense of exposure.

The circumstances in which the work was written are central to its atmosphere. At the end of December 2021, the world seemed to be entering another period of uncertainty. The Covid crisis had already endured far longer than anyone had imagined when it began. The climate crisis was becoming increasingly immediate rather than a problem deferred to some distant future. At the same time, the possibility of war between Russia and Ukraine was beginning to cast an unmistakable shadow over Europe.

The Darkling Light does not attempt to turn these events into musical illustrations. There is no literal pandemic music, no descriptive climate catastrophe and no depiction of approaching armies. The symphony instead responds to the psychological atmosphere produced by their simultaneous presence. It is music written at a moment when the future itself seemed increasingly difficult to see clearly.

The opening is therefore remarkably restrained. A single muted violin, without vibrato, enters alone with a searching and exposed line. After the broad landscapes and historical confidence of the preceding symphony, the effect is immediate. The music has been reduced to an individual voice.

This opening line does not make a declaration. It seems to search. Its uncertainty is essential to the character of the work, because the symphony begins not with conflict but with a question for which there is no immediate answer. The remaining instruments enter gradually, each contributing to the formation of the musical world. They do not simply provide accompaniment for the first violin. Rather, the symphony seems to assemble itself voice by voice. Relationships begin to form, lines respond to one another and the possibility of a collective identity gradually emerges.

Yet that identity remains fragile. The five voices do not immediately become a unified body. They retain their individuality, and throughout the work there is a continuing tension between separation and connection. Individual lines emerge, others answer, the texture gathers into moments of collective strength, and then the unity begins to dissolve again.

This process becomes one of the central ideas of the symphony. The experience of isolation had, by the end of 2021, become a familiar part of modern life. Physical separation, restrictions, closed borders and the disruption of ordinary human contact had altered the experience of community. At the same time, the very crises producing this isolation had demonstrated how profoundly interconnected the world had become. A virus, a changing climate or the threat of conflict could not be contained within the boundaries of one individual life or one nation.

The five instruments of the string orchestra can therefore be heard as a small community. They attempt to form relationships, to support one another and to create moments of shared direction, but they exist in a world which repeatedly draws them back towards isolation. As the work develops, the individual lines become increasingly interconnected and the texture acquires greater density. The music begins to gather force, but its growth does not suggest increasing confidence. On the

contrary, the accumulation creates pressure. The closer the instruments move towards collective strength, the more strongly the underlying tension makes itself felt.

One of the most remarkable transformations occurs when this developing activity suddenly gives way to an extraordinarily sparse musical landscape. Long, isolated notes are distributed between the instruments, separated by extensive spaces. The effect is not simply one of quietness. It is a quietness in which absence has become almost tangible. Here the music seems to inhabit a world emptied of certainty. The earlier connections between the instruments have not disappeared, but they have become attenuated. Each voice appears isolated within a larger silence. The symphony offers no explanation for this condition and makes no attempt to sentimentalise it. It simply allows the space to exist.

From this exposed stillness, however, activity gradually begins to return. The separate lines begin once more to interact, and the music acquires increasing momentum and tension. By the central, more animated stages of the work, the five instruments are engaged in a vigorous collective argument. The symphony now begins to suggest something approaching struggle. Yet even here there is no conventional symphonic heroism. The music does not appear to confront an obstacle in order to overcome it. Its intensity seems instead to arise from pressure. The instruments move against and around one another, rhythmic activity increases and the texture repeatedly gathers itself into more substantial sonorities, but there is no assurance that these moments of collective force will provide a solution.

This refusal of conventional resolution is fundamental to the work. *The Darkling Light* is not a crisis symphony in which darkness is overcome by a final affirmation of hope. Its title is far more ambiguous. The light exists, but it is darkening. Darkness is present, but it is never absolute. Neither state finally conquers the other.

The music subsequently returns to a more exposed texture, once again allowing an individual voice to emerge before the others gradually re-enter. The earlier process begins again in altered form: separation, connection, accumulation and fragmentation. The symphony seems to move in cycles rather than along a simple path from darkness towards light.

This cyclical structure gives the work much of its emotional force. In a world defined by continuing crises, there is no reason to believe that a single moment of resolution will settle everything. The sense of pressure may diminish, but it can return. Communities may come together, only to find themselves separated again. Anxiety may be temporarily contained, but not eliminated.

The later stages of the symphony intensify these processes. The musical material becomes increasingly animated and the string orchestra acquires greater weight. Yet the music still avoids a single overwhelming catastrophe. Its intensity lies partly in its restraint. Even at its most forceful, the symphony does not attempt to tell the listener what to feel or where the emotional argument must lead.

Eventually, the accumulated energy begins to disappear. At the final stage, the music is reduced once again to extreme quietness. The strings enter at *pp*, and the texture becomes fragile almost to the point of disappearance. But this is not the quietness of the opening. The symphony began in uncertainty because its world had not yet been formed. The final quietness comes after everything that has happened. The five voices have moved from isolation towards connection, from connection towards collective intensity, from activity towards fragmentation and finally back towards stillness. The ending therefore contains the memory of the entire journey.

The final page is particularly revealing. Individual instruments gradually fall silent, sustained notes become widely separated and the bass is reduced to quiet pizzicato. The music does not end with an

emphatic collective gesture. It simply withdraws. There is no victory, but neither is there annihilation. Something remains.

This is where the title becomes the key to the entire symphony. *The Darkling Light* is not an image of light triumphing over darkness. The light is vulnerable. It is diminished, uncertain and surrounded by forces that threaten to extinguish it. Yet it remains visible.

The final stillness therefore feels neither optimistic nor despairing in any simple sense. It suggests something more difficult to define but perhaps more appropriate to the circumstances in which the work was written: endurance.

That may be the deepest achievement of this remarkably concentrated symphony. Faced with subjects as immense as a global health crisis, climate change and the approaching possibility of war, Bullock does not attempt to encompass the events themselves. Instead, he reduces the musical world to five voices and allows their relationships to become a reflection of a wider human condition. They search for one another, and can still come together. They lose one another, gather strength … or fragment. Eventually they fall almost silent and yet the silence is not complete.

In that sense, *Symphony No. 30* occupies a particularly powerful place in the developing sequence. No. 29 had begun with Mozartian wit and historical memory before expanding towards Romantic breadth and the elemental grandeur of the Austrian mountains. No. 30 turns away from all of that. The orchestra contracts to strings, the landscape disappears and the music enters a far more immediate and uncertain psychological world. After Mozart and Bruckner, after Salzburg and the mountains, there are simply five voices and a darkening light.

The result is a short work, but not a slight one. Its compression is one of its greatest strengths. Nothing feels ornamental, and the restricted forces create an unusual intensity of expression. The entire argument is contained within the changing relationships of the five instruments and the constantly shifting balance between individual vulnerability and collective strength.

In the end, *The Darkling Light* offers neither prophecy nor consolation. It does not tell us that the darkness will pass, nor does it surrender to it. It remains suspended between the two. Perhaps that is why its final pages are so affecting. After all the searching, gathering and fragmentation, the music does not insist upon an answer. It leaves us with what was still there in December 2021: uncertainty, fragility and the uneasy awareness that the light, however darkened, had not yet gone out.

Symphony No. 31 Op. 331

Wasserfall

Programme Note

Composed in Senheim, Germany in 2022 and inspired by a painting by Roswitha Foch in Maria Alm, *Symphony No. 31,* W*asserfall* is a symphonic response not simply to the appearance of a waterfall, but to its movement, energy and constantly changing character.

The work unfolds as a single continuous span in which musical ideas seem less like conventional themes than forces set into motion. From the opening stillness, fragments gradually gather momentum until the orchestra is swept into increasingly powerful currents of rapid movement. Figures pass between strings and wind, accumulate into larger masses, break apart and re-form, creating a musical landscape in perpetual transformation.

Yet *Wasserfall* is far from an uninterrupted torrent. Periods of intense activity are balanced by moments of suspension, broad melodic writing and unexpected spaces of calm. The music repeatedly seems to arrive at a point of release, only to discover a new source of energy and begin again in a different form.

The waterfall therefore becomes both image and structural principle. Like flowing water, the music is continuous without remaining static: its surface may change from turbulence to stillness, from weight to transparency, but beneath these transformations lies an unbroken sense of motion.

In *Wasserfall*, the orchestra does not merely describe a natural phenomenon. It becomes the phenomenon itself.

Discussion

There is a temptation, when approaching a work with a title such as *Wasserfall*, to begin by asking how successfully the composer has represented its subject. One expects rushing scales, plunging figures, shimmering orchestration and the accumulated force of a large orchestral climax. All of these things are present in *Symphony No. 31*, but such an approach ultimately misses what is most interesting about the work. *Wasserfall* is not primarily a piece of musical landscape painting. It is an attempt to construct a symphonic form which behaves according to the same principles as the phenomenon which inspired it.

This distinction is important. A conventional descriptive work might establish an image of a waterfall and then elaborate it through contrasting episodes: the source, the rushing current, the fall, the pool below, perhaps a final panoramic conclusion. Bullock's procedure is considerably less literal. The music begins not with a fully formed landscape but with a condition of possibility. There is space, restraint and fragmentation. The orchestra appears to be discovering its own material. Out of this relative stillness comes movement, and from movement comes accumulation.

The resulting sense of growth is one of the work's most compelling qualities. Musical activity does not simply begin and become louder. It spreads. Rapid figures emerge in one part of the orchestra and are taken up elsewhere; gestures which initially seem local become structural; separate strands increasingly combine into a larger current. The listener has the impression not of themes being developed in the traditional symphonic sense, but of energy finding new channels through which to move.

This gives the symphony an unusually physical quality. Much of its material is based on motion rather than melody in the conventional sense. Descending and rising figures, rapid repeated patterns and constantly redistributed orchestral gestures create a sense of momentum which can become almost elemental. Yet Bullock avoids allowing this process to harden into a single perpetual-motion texture. One of the most impressive aspects of the work is its understanding that a waterfall is defined as much by interruption and transformation as by continuous descent.

The music repeatedly opens out from turbulence into spaces of remarkable calm. After passages of concentrated activity, the texture may suddenly thin, leaving sustained sonorities and broad melodic gestures exposed. These moments are essential to the architecture. They are not simply lyrical interludes inserted to provide contrast. Rather, they represent another state of the same musical substance. The current has widened; the water has entered a pool; the previously irresistible motion has become suspended in space.

This is particularly significant because Bullock's lyricism here does not feel imposed upon the surrounding material. The broader melodic passages seem to grow naturally out of what preceded them. The same energy which produced rapid movement is capable, under different conditions, of producing long-breathed line. In this sense, *Wasserfall* demonstrates a characteristic strength of the mature symphonic writing: apparently contrasting materials are frequently revealed to be different manifestations of a single underlying impulse.

The orchestration contributes greatly to this impression. The orchestra is treated neither as a collection of independent colours nor simply as a great homogeneous mass. Instead, instrumental groups constantly alter the density and direction of the musical current. Strings provide much of the work's kinetic energy, but the wind instruments repeatedly interrupt, redirect or illuminate the texture. Brass and timpani introduce moments of greater weight, while the harp contributes another

dimension of resonance and luminosity. The changing distribution of the material is therefore inseparable from the form itself.

There is, nevertheless, something more than physical energy at work. As the symphony progresses, the increasingly forceful passages are balanced by episodes of reflection and even fragility. The title may suggest a natural subject, but the emotional world of the work is not confined to pictorial description. The listener is invited to experience movement as something more ambiguous: exhilarating, relentless, destructive, liberating and, at times, unexpectedly beautiful.

This is perhaps where *Wasserfall* differs most significantly from the earlier landscape-inspired symphonies. In works such as *Symphony No. 1, Yr Wyddfa*, landscape provides a setting for a musical journey. The physical world is inseparable from the emotional and autobiographical implications of that journey. By *Symphony No. 31,* the relationship between subject and structure has become more abstract. The landscape no longer needs to be narrated. Instead, its essential behaviour becomes a generator of musical form.

The result is a symphony in which continuity is more important than arrival. Even when the music appears to reach a point of culmination, it rarely gives the impression that the journey has simply ended. Energy is transformed, redirected or dispersed. A climax may be followed not by conventional resolution but by a new kind of space. This is one reason why the later stages of the work are so effective. After the accumulated power of the preceding music, Bullock allows the symphonic argument to withdraw, fragment and become more transparent. The waterfall does not simply stop. Its energy changes state.

That process gives the symphony an unusually organic sense of form. There are clearly differentiated regions, changes of tempo, texture and emotional temperature, yet the work resists division into separate episodes. Everything belongs to the same continuing process. The listener is carried forward by the conviction that each new transformation arises from what has gone before.

In this respect, *Wasserfall* represents a notable stage in Bullock's symphonic development. The large-scale architecture is achieved not primarily through the opposition of strongly contrasted themes, nor through adherence to inherited formal models, but through the controlled evolution of musical behaviour. The governing idea is simple enough to grasp immediately - continuous flowing energy - but rich enough to sustain a substantial orchestral structure.

The symphony's achievement lies in the fact that this idea never becomes merely mechanical. The music is full of motion, but it is not simply busy. It is powerful, but not permanently monumental. Its reflective passages do not interrupt the argument; they deepen it. Its climaxes do not exist merely for their own sake, but emerge from processes which have been patiently established and transformed.

Ultimately, the most convincing description of *Wasserfall* may be the simplest one. This is not music which stands at a distance and observes a waterfall. It enters the movement itself. Its themes flow, collide, gather force, disperse and return in altered form. Like water, the musical substance is never entirely the same from one moment to the next, yet the sense of continuity remains unbroken.

That is the real symphonic idea behind *Wasserfall*: not the imitation of nature, but the creation of a musical organism governed by the same restless principle of perpetual transformation.

Symphony No. 32 Op. 333

Life!

Programme Note

Life! is another celebration of new life, written before the birth of the composer's second granddaughter, Norah. Like Symphony No. 27, *For a New Life*, the work follows the course of the pregnancy through music, but this time the six movements are based upon the precise and changing rhythms of the baby's heartbeat as heard and recorded during successive scans.

Each movement therefore possesses its own tempo and rhythmic character, derived from a particular moment in the developing child's life. From the first urgent heartbeat detected at seven weeks, through increasing activity, reflection, gratitude and anticipation, the symphony follows the growing awareness of a new person who is present, increasingly real, yet still unknown.

The work is also a musical gathering of the family into which Norah is about to arrive. Themes associated with her mother include the lullaby written by the composer shortly after his daughter's birth in Luxembourg in 1986. Her father is represented by elements of *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* and *Calon Lân*, while Norah's older sister Evelyn appears through her own musical material and a variation of *Evelyn went to the sea sea sea*. Other memories and identities enter the symphony, including a chorale outline of *Nun danket alle Gott*, an Austrian sunlight theme and one further theme whose identity remains the composer's secret.

These ideas are continually quoted, transformed, combined and re-combined. The symphony therefore brings together different periods, places and generations: Luxembourg in 1986, Wales, Austria, the birth of Evelyn and the approaching arrival of Norah.

The fifth movement, *Serenissima II*, returns to an image which had inspired a corresponding movement in *For a New Life*: the sight, in an ultrasound scan, of the baby's head in repose. Long string phrases and a cello counter-melody respond to the exquisite curve of Norah's head, while musical memories from elsewhere in the family world briefly enter the texture.

The final movement, significantly entitled *Finale and Beginning*, gathers the symphony's various themes into an increasingly excited and energetic conclusion. The heartbeat accelerates, family themes combine, fragments become fughettas and the music becomes almost breathless with anticipation.

Then, after the accumulated activity has subsided, the solemn music heard earlier in the symphony returns. As the work comes quietly to its close, flute and clarinet introduce the outline of a new idea, shaped to the rhythm of the name **Norah *****.

After all the music of the family who are waiting for her, the final gesture belongs to the one person who has not yet arrived.

Written in Senheim Germany in 2022 and 2023, this is her symphony.

Discussion

There is something immediately distinctive about *Symphony No. 32, Life!*, even before one examines its musical construction. It is an intensely personal work, yet it does not turn inward upon the composer's private feelings alone. Instead, it creates a musical space in which an entire family is already present, waiting for one person who has not yet arrived.

That gives the symphony a rather different emotional perspective from its immediate predecessor in this particular family sequence, *Symphony No. 27, For a New Life*. The earlier work was written in the months before the birth of Evelyn, the composer's first granddaughter, and followed the extraordinary discovery of a new existence from the first heard heartbeat onwards. *Life!* returns to that fundamental subject in the months before the birth of Norah, Evelyn's sister. The basic miracle is the same, but the musical situation has changed in that there is now already an older sister, already a previous symphony written for a granddaughter and musical memories which have themselves acquired histories. So the result is not repetition, but continuation. Indeed, continuation becomes one of the central ideas of the work.

The most concrete structural principle comes directly from the ultrasound scans made during the pregnancy. Each of the symphony's six movements is based upon a different recorded heartbeat rhythm. The differing speeds of the movements are therefore not arbitrary expressive decisions, but arise from actual physical evidence of the developing child. The symphony begins after the seven-week scan, with the discovery of a new and urgent heartbeat, and continues through later stages of pregnancy as the changing rhythms of that life become the foundation for changing musical worlds.

This immediately gives *Life!* an unusual relationship with time. The work is composed in response to events which are happening in the present, but its subject is someone who belongs to the future. Each movement records, in effect, a stage in the gradual recognition that Norah exists. The composer hears her before meeting her, responds to evidence of her presence and writes music towards a person whose character, voice and individuality remain unknown.

Yet the symphony does not attempt to solve that mystery by inventing a musical portrait of Norah before her birth. Quite the opposite. The work is full of identifiable musical personalities, but Norah herself remains, for most of its duration, without an established theme. Her mother has hers, her father has his. Evelyn certainly has hers. Other memories and identities have theirs. Norah is the one presence towards whom all this music is moving, but whose musical identity has not yet been revealed. That is the work's most beautiful paradox.

The **first movement** establishes the new situation with gentle but slightly excited activity, interrupted by the urgent heartbeat detected at the seven-week scan. Already, however, the symphony begins to gather other identities around this new centre. A weightier theme enters, followed by a variation of *Evelyn went to the sea sea sea* and her mother's own lullaby. The music therefore begins not with Norah in isolation, but with the family already musically surrounding her.

The appearance of this material is especially significant. This lullaby was written shortly after the composer's daughter's own birth in Luxembourg in 1986. Decades later, it returns in music written during the pregnancy of her second daughter. The theme is therefore not simply an identifying label for the mother. It carries time within it. A melody composed to welcome a newborn daughter becomes part of the musical world waiting for that daughter's child. Here, as elsewhere in the symphony, musical quotation is inseparable from memory.

The movement also introduces a solemn chordal passage which will later return. Its reappearance is deliberately prepared: the music itself remembers that something has been left unresolved. The first movement then closes with the side drum heartbeat, returning the listener to the most immediate fact behind the entire enterprise. Before the themes, the memories and the family associations, there is simply the evidence that a new life is there.

The **second movement** brings a different heartbeat and therefore a different musical energy. The rhythm is faster and the material more excited. Hints of *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* establish the presence of her father, returning to the family musical language already associated with him in *Symphony No. 27*. As the material develops, the music reaches a point of considerable intensity before another characteristic element appears: the Austrian sunlight theme.

This is one of the pleasures of the symphony's construction. It does not attempt to maintain a strict hierarchy between the supposedly important and supposedly incidental. A national song, a lullaby, a children's song, a remembered image, a chorale and a private musical reference may all become part of the same family conversation. The symphony's unity comes not from stylistic uniformity but from the continual transformation and recombination of its materials.

The **third movement** deepens this process. Its solemn opening gradually gives way to Evelyn's presence, first through her own theme and then through lighter, almost zephyr-like accompanying figures. Later, *Evelyn went to the sea sea sea* returns with the emphatic marking **LIFE!**, acquiring an expansive and increasingly operatic character as it combines with the mother's material.

The significance of Evelyn's presence here is greater than a simple family portrait. She represents a form of continuity which Norah cannot yet possess. Evelyn has already arrived. She already has a name, experiences and musical associations. Her music can be recognised because she is known. Norah remains the unknown person at the centre of the symphony.

The return of the solemn chords at the end of the movement therefore has an important structural function. The symphony is not moving through a succession of isolated episodes. Ideas return because the work is itself accumulating a memory. What has happened remains present. The music grows by remembering.

That principle becomes particularly powerful in the **fourth movement**, inspired by gratitude and relief after difficult weeks. Here the outline of *Nun danket alle Gott* enters the symphony. Its appearance is emotionally direct but musically understated: the chorale is suggested rather than presented in full. This is not an act of triumphal proclamation. The outline itself is enough.

The movement then introduces an emotional counter-theme and develops into a more dynamic and energetic passage, over which the chorale returns. The effect is to place two kinds of response side by side: the intensely personal emotion of the moment and the older, collective voice of thanksgiving. The chorale does not stand outside the symphony as a quotation from another world. It becomes part of the family's musical memory during the pregnancy.

That it returns later is therefore entirely appropriate. Gratitude, once introduced, becomes part of the accumulated emotional history of the work.

The **fifth movement,** *Serenissima II*, creates another connection with *Symphony No. 27*. Its title immediately acknowledges its predecessor: the same inspiration has returned, but under different circumstances and in a different musical context. Again, the starting point is an ultrasound image of an unborn child's head in repose. This time, long phrases in the strings and a cello counter-melody respond to what the composer describes as the exquisite curve of Norah's head.

The movement is serene, but its serenity is not isolated from the rest of the symphony. Elements associated with Evelyn appear in the horn and woodwind, and after rehearsal A the chorale theme returns in the form of a small canon. At C the Austrian sunlight material also returns and is itself treated canonically before building towards a climax. The movement thus becomes a remarkable point of intersection between contemplation and memory.

Norah is observed in stillness, but she is already surrounded by musical relationships.

The use of canon here is particularly apt, not because the symphony is making any abstract contrapuntal statement, but because imitation and continuation are fundamental to its subject. One voice follows another. A musical idea is repeated but altered. The younger child follows the elder sister into the family, just as *Serenissima II* follows its earlier counterpart in *Symphony No. 27*. The same, but not the same.

Everything now leads towards the **final movement,** whose title, *Finale and Beginning*, reveals perhaps the deepest idea of the entire symphony. At first, the movement appears to be the expected culmination. Excited, scurrying activity returns, built around the mother's material in a new variant and interrupted by the opening of *Calon Lân*. Earlier themes reappear. The strong material from the beginning of the symphony returns. The heartbeat accelerates. Evelyn's song becomes a rapid fughetta. The musical pace increases and the family materials begin to overlap in increasingly animated combinations.

At this point the symphony becomes almost a musical family gathering. The accumulated memories of the preceding movements are all active within the same musical space. As the composer points out, the whole family is present - minus one, and that absence is crucial.

For all its excitement and density, the finale cannot simply end by making the existing material louder, faster or more triumphant. That would merely celebrate the people who are already there. The symphony's purpose is not simply to assemble the family; it is to prepare for its transformation.

Accordingly, the accumulated activity eventually breaks off. The solemn music, prepared much earlier, suddenly returns. The texture becomes more exposed. The top voice is heard alone, first through the horn and then the trumpet, before the woodwinds take over. The symphony begins to withdraw from the excited collective world it has so carefully constructed. Then comes its decisive gesture. As the music approaches silence, flute and clarinet suggest the outline of a new idea. Its rhythm follows the name **Norah *****. Nothing could be more appropriate.

Throughout the symphony, the people who are already known have brought their musical histories with them. The mother's theme reaches back to Luxembourg in 1986 and to the night of her own birth. The father's material brings Welsh identity and song into the work. Evelyn, now an elder sister, has acquired her own musical presence. Other themes recall earlier periods, places and emotional experiences in the composer's life. Norah, however, has no past within the family. Her music therefore cannot arrive as another quotation. It must be new.

This is why the ending of *Life!* is so affecting. After twenty-seven minutes of accumulated material, family memory, heartbeat rhythms, gratitude, anxiety, relief and excited anticipation, the symphony does not close with a grand final statement. It makes space. The music falls quiet enough for something new to be heard.

The outline of Norah's theme is not the culmination of everything that has preceded it in the conventional symphonic sense. It is the beginning of what will follow. That is what makes *Finale and Beginning* more than a clever title. The end of the symphony and the beginning of Norah's

independent musical identity become the same moment. The work concludes not by completing a journey, but by opening one.

In this respect, *Symphony No. 32* occupies a particularly revealing place in the larger symphonic sequence. Much of the symphonic journey has involved landscape, travel, memory, history and personal experience. *Life!* brings many of these concerns into an intensely concentrated family context. Luxembourg, Wales, Austria and earlier compositions all return, not as subjects in themselves but as fragments of inheritance. A new person is about to enter a world already shaped by places, histories and relationships.

Yet the symphony never suggests that Norah will simply be the sum of those inheritances. That would contradict its entire emotional logic. She arrives surrounded by memory, but she is not reducible to memory. She is welcomed by music which already exists, but the final idea must be her own. The family provides the context; Norah provides the future.

That may be the deepest meaning of *Life!*. A new human being does not enter an empty world. There are already voices, stories, songs, anxieties, loyalties and memories waiting. But every new life changes the world into which it arrives.

The symphony understands both sides of that truth. It gathers the family together, allows their musical identities to meet and collide, remembers where they have come from, and then, at the very end, falls silent enough to hear the first outline of someone who is not yet known.

This is Norah's symphony.

Symphony No. 33 Op. 334

The Temple

Programme Note

"Inspired by a visit to the now disused Kailashnatha Temple at Kanchipuram, and several others, and dedicated 'to those who were there'. I wondered what might linger in the air after countless centuries of worship and activity. This one-movement symphony has three main sections, the first is marked 'Spirits and Memories enter the long-empty Temple' the second 'SHIVA' and finally 'Spirits and Memories leave the again-empty Temple'. I have used original melodic and rhythmic material noted down on the day.

The end is the beginning is the end. The final section reverses and inverts the music of the first, including the bird calls. So there is no life, no death, no past, no future, no up, no down, no hot, no cold, no forwards, no backwards, no optimism, no pessimism. All is one. We are all one. Everything in this universe, and maybe as well in parallel or alternative universes, is ONE. To recognise the Divine is to recognise this space where there are no contradictions."

The Temple is a one-movement symphony concerned with memory, presence and the possibility that distinctions which appear fundamental to human experience may ultimately be illusory.

The work is in three main sections. The first, Spirits and Memories enter the long-empty Temple, draws upon original melodic and rhythmic material noted down during the visit. Particularly important are Hindu chants which were being sung outside the disused temple itself and which the composer wrote down as he heard them. Bird calls and other sounds remembered from the place also become part of the musical world. Although the temple itself was empty, the sounds of continuing worship outside it created a powerful sense in which past and present, absence and presence, seemed to exist simultaneously.

The central section, SHIVA, forms the philosophical centre of the symphony. During the same journey, the composer acquired an unusual statue of Shiva. Instead of standing upright in the conventional manner, Shiva is balanced on his hands, with his legs in the air. The image is both deeply meaningful and, in another sense, entirely meaningless. If there is no absolute up or down, why should Shiva not ‘stand’ in this way?

This idea is reflected in the musical construction of the work. The final section, Spirits and Memories leave the again-empty Temple, returns to the material of the opening, but it is not a conventional recapitulation. The music is reversed and inverted, including the bird calls themselves. Retrograde and inverted passages become musical expressions of the symphony's larger idea: that forwards and backwards, up and down, beginning and ending may be different manifestations of the same underlying reality.

The end is the beginning is the end. The symphony ultimately explores the possibility that there is no absolute separation between life and death, past and future, presence and absence, optimism and pessimism. Everything belongs to one reality. All is one.

Written in India, England, and Senheim, Germany, in February - March 2023

Discussion

Symphony No. 33, *The Temple*, is the second major work to emerge from Dafydd Bullock's journey through India, but it occupies a very different imaginative world from its predecessor, *Ganges*. Where *Ganges* responded to India through accumulation—through the overwhelming coexistence of sounds, colours, people, experiences and musical impressions—*The Temple* moves towards the opposite philosophical possibility. It begins with multiplicity, memory and accumulated history, but gradually asks whether all the things that appear separate may, at some deeper level, belong to a single reality.

The immediate inspiration was a visit to the now-disused Kailashnatha Temple at Kanchipuram in southern India. Faced with a place which had once been the centre of centuries of worship and human activity, Bullock found himself wondering what might remain. The people who had prayed there had gone; their lives belonged to the past; the building itself no longer functioned in the way for which it had originally been created. Yet the idea that such a place could simply become empty seemed inadequate. What lingered after all those centuries? Could human presence, memory and belief simply disappear?

The circumstances of the visit gave this question an additional and particularly striking dimension. Although the temple itself was disused, Hindu chants were being sung outside it. Bullock simply stood there and wrote down what he heard, incorporating this material into the symphony alongside other melodic and rhythmic ideas noted during the journey. As in *Ganges*, the Indian material is therefore not the product of an imagined or reconstructed musical environment. It comes directly from experience. The composer heard the sounds and wrote them down.

In the context of *The Temple*, however, the chanting has a significance which goes beyond its musical character. The building was apparently empty, yet outside it living voices were continuing a tradition of worship. The distinction between past and present immediately became less secure. The ancient temple belonged to history, but the sounds associated with the spiritual world from which it had emerged were still present in the air. The past was not merely remembered. In some sense, it was still sounding.

This paradox lies at the heart of the opening section, entitled *"Spirits and Memories enter the long-empty Temple."* The choice of those words is revealing. Spirits and memories might appear to belong to different worlds: one suggesting a presence beyond physical life, the other an image preserved from the past. Yet the symphony gradually questions such distinctions. What is the difference between something remembered and something which remains? When does the past cease to be present? Can a place which contains the accumulated experience of centuries ever truly be described as empty?

The musical world of the opening is correspondingly rich in associations. The chants heard outside the temple enter the orchestral texture alongside original melodic and rhythmic material from the journey, while bird calls and other remembered sounds help to establish the physical environment surrounding the building. These details are important because they prevent the symphony from becoming an abstract meditation detached from reality. The temple exists in a particular place. Birds can be heard. Human voices are singing. Memory, nature, worship and the present moment occupy the same acoustic space.

Yet the work is not concerned simply with preserving those sounds. Once they have entered the symphony, they become part of a larger process. The question is not merely what the composer

heard, but what these apparently separate experiences might reveal when placed within the same musical structure.

The answer begins to emerge in the central section, simply entitled *"SHIVA."*

The significance of Shiva in the symphony became clearer through an object acquired during the same journey: an unusual statue in which Shiva is represented standing on his hands, with his legs in the air. The image departs radically from the normal human orientation of the body, and at first seems almost absurd. Why should Shiva be upside down? But that question immediately invites another. Why should he not be? The statue is both fundamentally meaningful and, in another sense, entirely meaningless. If the distinction between up and down is not absolute, then the idea of being upside down begins to lose its certainty. From another perspective, perhaps the upright observer is the one who is inverted.

This paradox provides one of the most illuminating images for the entire symphony. The central section headed *"SHIVA"* is not simply a musical portrait of a deity, nor should the work be understood as an attempt to explain Hindu theology through symphonic means. Rather, Shiva becomes the point at which the composer's larger thought comes into focus. The image of the inverted figure suggests a reality in which the oppositions through which human beings habitually organise experience may not possess the absolute significance we normally give them.

Up and down are obvious examples, but the thought extends much further. There is life and death, yet perhaps not an absolute separation between them. There is past and future, yet the present itself is already becoming memory. There is optimism and pessimism, but perhaps these are different responses to a reality which remains beyond either description. There is presence and absence, as the apparently empty temple itself demonstrates. There are beginnings and endings, arrivals and departures, but the symphony will eventually question whether these distinctions are as final as they appear.

What makes *The Temple* particularly remarkable is that these philosophical ideas are not merely attached to the music as a programme. They determine the compositional techniques themselves.

Retrograde passages question the distinction between forwards and backwards. A melody heard from its final note towards its first remains the same material, even though its temporal direction has been reversed. Inversion questions the distinction between up and down. Intervals which rise now fall, while descending gestures rise. The shape has been turned upside down, just as Shiva has been turned upside down in the statue.

Yet neither transformation destroys the identity of the material. The retrograde version of a passage remains connected to what preceded it. The inversion remains recognisably derived from the original. The musical idea has become something apparently opposite while continuing to belong to the same source.

This is where the technical construction and the philosophical conception become inseparable. Retrograde and inversion are not simply devices chosen to add complexity or variety. They are musical equivalents of the thought represented by the inverted Shiva. A melody can move forwards or backwards, upwards or downwards, while remaining part of the same musical identity. The apparent opposition exists, but it does not necessarily imply separation.

The final section, *Spirits and Memories leave the again-empty Temple,* carries this idea to its most complete expression. The music returns towards the opening, but the return is not a conventional recapitulation. The material is reversed and inverted, including the bird calls themselves. This is much more significant than a formal trick. Had the opening simply returned unchanged, the work

might have suggested a familiar circular structure. The spirits and memories would enter; Shiva would appear; the spirits and memories would depart; the temple would be restored to its original emptiness. The journey would have come full circle. Here the final music does not simply return, it returns transformed.

The beginning has become its apparent opposite. The material moves backwards and upside down, yet remains recognisably connected with what has already been heard. In this way the end contains the beginning, while the beginning, understood retrospectively, already contains the possibility of the end. The familiar hierarchy between first and last begins to weaken.

This gives particular force to the composer's description of the work: *The end is the beginning is the end*. The phrase is not merely a poetic summary of the symphony's circular form. It describes its underlying compositional and philosophical structure. The end does not simply follow the beginning. It reveals another orientation of it.

Even the bird calls are drawn into this process. This is an important detail because they belong to the immediate physical world rather than to an abstract philosophical argument. They are simply sounds heard around the temple. Yet when they too are subjected to reversal and inversion, they become part of the same exploration of identity and transformation. Nothing is excluded from the larger conception.

The temple itself is transformed by this process of thought. At the beginning, it is long empty, yet spirits and memories enter it. At the end, they leave the again-empty temple. But the symmetry is deceptive. The listener has heard the chanting outside, the remembered sounds of the place, the musical material derived from the journey and the central encounter with Shiva. The temple may appear to have returned to emptiness, but the experience of hearing the work has made such emptiness impossible to understand in a simple way. Has anything really entered? Has anything really left?

The chanting heard outside the temple provides a particularly beautiful answer. The building may have been disused, but the spiritual and cultural world associated with it was still alive in the present. The sounds of worship were continuing. The past and present were not separate compartments. They existed simultaneously in the same place.

The symphony's larger philosophical conception grows naturally from this experience. If memory remains present, if an empty temple can still be full of accumulated human meaning, if a melody can travel backwards and remain itself, if Shiva can stand on his hands without the universe collapsing, then perhaps the oppositions by which human consciousness divides reality are less absolute than they appear.

This does not mean that the symphony claims everything is identical. Up and down remain different orientations; a melody and its inversion are not literally the same sequence of intervals; life and death remain profoundly different human experiences. The argument is subtler. Difference does not necessarily imply absolute separation. Things may be opposed from one perspective while remaining part of a deeper unity.

That is why the idea of *all being one* is not presented as a conventional optimistic conclusion. Indeed, optimism and pessimism themselves are included among the opposites which the work ultimately places within the same larger reality. The symphony does not seek victory, resolution or consolation in the traditional symphonic sense. It does not move from darkness towards light or from conflict towards triumph. Instead, it questions the necessity of such oppositions.

In this respect, *The Temple* represents a striking development within Bullock's symphonic journey. Much of the symphonic tradition depends upon contrast and opposition: themes confront one another, tensions accumulate and seek release, darkness is answered by light, conflict moves towards reconciliation or victory. Bullock does not abandon musical contrast in *The Temple*, but the philosophical conception of the work places contrast within a different framework. What if the opposites are not enemies? What if beginning and ending are simply different orientations of the same process? What if an empty temple is not empty? What if the past is still singing outside?

The work never attempts to answer such questions through words. Its answer is musical. It allows the chants, the bird calls, the melodic and rhythmic material gathered in India, the central image of Shiva and the transformed return of the opening to exist within one continuous symphonic structure.

This unity of conception is perhaps the most impressive feature of *Symphony No. 33*. The subject, the experience which inspired it, the philosophical thought which grew from that experience and the technical procedures through which the music is constructed all arise from the same central impulse. The disused temple suggests the persistence of memory. The continuing chants outside it complicate the distinction between past and present. The inverted Shiva questions up and down. Retrograde passages question forwards and backwards. Inversion gives musical form to the same challenge. The transformed return questions beginning and ending.

Everything leads back towards the same thought, although the thought itself ultimately resists being reduced to a simple proposition. The symphony begins in a particular place in southern India, but it gradually expands beyond that place. The temple becomes a space in which distinctions begin to dissolve: between those who were there and those who are there now, between the living voices outside and the memories within, between the composer hearing a sound and the music which later transforms it. The spirits enter and leave - and he temple is empty again.

And yet the symphony leaves us uncertain whether anything has moved at all. That uncertainty is not a failure of resolution. It is the resolution.

For a work concerned with the possibility that life and death, past and future, up and down, forwards and backwards are not ultimately separate realities, there can be no conventional final answer. There can only be the recognition that the divisions themselves may belong to the way in which we perceive the universe rather than to the universe itself.

The Temple therefore arrives, quietly but profoundly, at the idea which generated its whole conception: that beneath the contradictions of human experience there may exist a reality in which nothing is finally separate from anything else.

Symphony No. 34 Op. 341

Sussex

Programme Note

Sussex is a symphony inspired by landscape, but its four movements are not intended as musical pictures. Rather, each draws its character from a different aspect of the natural world and from the changing perspective it creates. The symphony moves from the open expanses of the countryside to the physical energy of a storm, from the transformed world of moonlight to the immense stillness of the night sky. Its movements are entitled *From the Fields*, *From the Storm*, *From the Moon* and *From the Night and the Stars*. The repeated word "from" is significant. The music does not attempt simply to describe these things. It grows out of them.

The **first movement** unfolds in flowing melodic lines which gradually expand from an intimate string texture into a broader orchestral landscape. *From the Storm* brings greater energy and turbulence, while the **third movement** creates a more distant and spacious world in which familiar musical gestures seem transformed by moonlight.

In the **finale**, the perspective widens still further. The landscape of the earlier movements remains present, but it is now placed beneath the vastness of the night and the stars. Broad orchestral sonorities coexist with continuing movement, suggesting both the immense stillness of the sky and the restless life of the world below.

Sussex is therefore a journey not through different places, but through different ways of seeing the same place. Fields, weather, moonlight and starlight become sources from which the music grows, gradually enlarging the listener's perspective from the immediate landscape to the seemingly limitless space above it.

Written in Chiddingly, Sussex, England during a two week stay in August, 2023 and dedicated to Susan Bullock and Richard Berkeley Steele.

Discussion

Symphony No. 34, *Sussex*, belongs to a continuing strand in Dafydd Bullock's symphonic writing in which landscape provides the initial impulse for large-scale musical thought. Yet it differs significantly from works in which a particular place, journey or natural phenomenon becomes the explicit subject of the symphony. *Sussex* is not concerned with travelling through a landscape, nor does it attempt to provide a sequence of orchestral pictures. Its more subtle purpose is suggested by the titles of its four movements: *From the Fields*, *From the Storm*, *From the Moon* and *From the Night and the Stars*.

The repeated preposition is important. The music comes **from** these experiences. Landscape, weather and light are not objects placed before the listener for musical description. They are sources of energy, atmosphere and perspective. The symphony asks not, "What does a field or a storm sound like?" but rather, "What kind of music might grow from the experience of being there?"

This gives the work an unusual unity. The four movements undoubtedly inhabit different musical worlds, yet they do not represent four unrelated scenes. Sussex remains the constant presence. What changes is the perspective from which it is experienced.

The **first movement,** *From the Fields*, establishes the symphony's fundamental lyrical character. Its opening is relatively intimate, with the strings introducing flowing material before the wider orchestra gradually enters. There is no attempt to create an instant panorama. The landscape seems to emerge from within the musical texture itself.

This is characteristic of Bullock's approach to place. The music does not stand at a distance and observe. It inhabits. The opening gestures possess movement and direction, but without the urgency associated with dramatic narrative. Lines rise and fall, overlap and continue, creating an impression of organic growth. The fields are not represented as a static pastoral scene. They become a source of continuity.

As the orchestra gradually expands, the original material is enlarged rather than abandoned. Woodwind, brass and timpani increase the scale and weight of the musical argument, but the movement remains connected to the flowing impulse of its opening. The resulting architecture is therefore one of growth rather than opposition. Instead of presenting sharply contrasted subjects and allowing them to compete, the music seems to develop by discovering new possibilities within material which has already established its identity.

There is an important distinction here between expansion and triumph. The orchestra becomes larger and more powerful, but the purpose is not simply to transform the pastoral into the monumental. The movement repeatedly preserves a sense of openness. Even when the musical texture becomes fuller, one remains aware of space around the sound. That openness is fundamental to the symphony as a whole.

The **second movement,** *From the Storm*, provides the expected contrast in energy, but again the title prevents a merely descriptive interpretation. This is not simply "a storm movement" in the nineteenth-century sense. There is no obligation to follow the progress of an approaching storm, depict its violence and then provide a conventional calm after its passing.

Instead, the movement appears to draw upon the disturbance, momentum and release associated with the experience of violent weather. Its musical language is more concentrated and physical. Rhythmic energy becomes more prominent, orchestral contrasts are sharper and the sense of

forward propulsion is considerably stronger. Yet the movement's real subject is not destruction. Even at its most turbulent, the underlying lyricism of the symphony remains present. Energy changes its form but does not erase identity. The musical world established in *From the Fields* has been disturbed, but it has not been replaced.

This is one of the work's most attractive characteristics. The symphony does not construct contrast through complete rupture. Each new perspective alters what has gone before. The storm transforms the landscape rather than removing it.

After the physical energy of the second movement, *From the Moon* changes the entire scale of perception. The music becomes more restrained, spacious and inward. Individual instrumental voices emerge from a reduced orchestral texture, and the relationship between sound and silence acquires a new importance. Moonlight does not create a different world. It changes the world that already exists.

This is precisely the effect achieved by the music. The lyrical impulse remains, but it is heard differently. Movement becomes more remote. Harmonic space assumes greater importance. Sustained sonorities and the careful emergence of individual voices create a sense of distance in which time itself seems less urgent.

The movement is not merely nocturnal. Its atmosphere is stranger and more detached than that description would suggest. Familiar shapes remain visible, but their solidity has changed. What was immediate in the first movement has become distant; what was physically energetic in the second is now absorbed into a more spacious and reflective musical environment. This change of perspective is one of the symphony's deepest structural ideas. The same landscape has passed through daylight and storm. It is now seen under moonlight, and the listener's relationship with it has altered.

The **finale**, *From the Night and the Stars*, expands that process to its furthest point. The earlier movements have remained close, in different ways, to the human scale of experience. Fields can be walked through. A storm can be felt physically. Moonlight transforms a familiar landscape. But the night sky introduces another order of magnitude. The symphony's perspective widens.

The finale retains something of the spaciousness discovered in the third movement, but it gradually develops greater breadth and weight. Large orchestral sonorities begin to coexist with continuing movement, creating a striking relationship between the immense and the immediate. This coexistence seems central to the movement's meaning. The stars are not represented through decorative orchestral glitter. Nor does the music simply attempt to overwhelm the listener with vastness. Instead, Bullock allows two different scales of existence to sound simultaneously. Above, there is the apparent stillness of immense harmonic space, below, there is continuing movement. The strings remain active beneath broad orchestral sonorities, creating an image not of a static universe but of life continuing beneath something immeasurably larger than itself. The effect is quietly philosophical without ever becoming abstract.

This also distinguishes *Sussex* from Bullock's mountain symphonies. In those works, scale is frequently vertical and physical. The presence of mountains invites the orchestra to respond with ascent, weight and monumentality. In *Sussex*, the scale is more horizontal and open. The fields establish breadth rather than height, and the final enlargement of perspective comes not through climbing towards a summit but through looking upwards. The journey of the symphony therefore has a beautiful simplicity. It begins close to the earth, experiences disturbance, becomes distanced and reflective and, finally, it looks into the night. This progression might suggest a programme, but the symphony is too organically constructed to be reduced to one. The movements do not function as separate postcards from Sussex. They represent successive transformations of a common imaginative world.

That world also has an important relationship with the *Sussex String Quartet*. The quartet and the symphony share a sense that place is more than geographical location. Sussex becomes an imaginative territory: open countryside, changing weather, shifting light and the extraordinary capacity of a familiar landscape to appear entirely different according to the conditions in which it is experienced. The difference lies in scale and perspective.

The string quartet explores such a world through intimacy. Four instruments can suggest the experience of walking, observing and remembering. The symphony allows that same imaginative territory to expand into a much wider field of vision. The orchestra makes possible not simply greater volume or colour, but greater distance. The listener can be within the fields and then, later, beneath the stars.

This is perhaps the central achievement of *Sussex*. It understands that the character of a landscape is never fixed. It is changed by weather, light, distance and the time of day. The physical place remains, but our experience of it is continually transformed.

Bullock translates this idea into symphonic form without resorting to literal depiction. The fields generate flowing musical continuity. The storm releases rhythmic and orchestral energy. Moonlight creates distance and suspension. The stars enlarge the scale of musical thought itself.

The four movements are therefore linked not by the repetition of a single programme, but by a continuing exploration of perspective. This makes *Sussex* one of the more subtle landscape symphonies in the sequence. *Wasserfall* allows the behaviour of water to determine the behaviour of the music itself: flowing, accumulating, dispersing and changing direction. *Sussex* operates differently. Here the natural world determines the way the music is perceived and the same landscape is heard through changing conditions - daylight, storm, moonlight and starlight. Beneath them all lies the same world.

The final movement gives this idea its widest expression. The fields with which the symphony began have not been forgotten, but they have been placed within a larger perspective. The human world continues in motion beneath the immense stillness of the night sky. There is something quietly moving about that conclusion. The symphony does not attempt to conquer its landscape or explain it. It simply allows the perspective to widen until the familiar world is seen as part of something much greater. In that sense, *Sussex* is a symphony about landscape, but also about perception itself. The fields, the storm, the moon and the stars are not destinations. They are points of departure. The music comes from them - and, in the end, leads us back to the same landscape, transformed by having seen it differently.

Symphony No. 35 Op. 343

Swarna Nagari

Programme Note

Inspired by a brief visit to the colossal model city—or perhaps model universe—at the Jain Museum in Ajmer, India in November, 2023, *Swarna Nagari – The Golden City* is a one-movement symphony concerned with the human struggle to rise above the repetitive activity and apparent meaninglessness of collective existence. The Golden City may be understood in many ways: as a heavenly or celestial realm, a Promised Land, Nirvana, enlightenment or redemption. Yet it is not presented as a destination which can easily be reached. It may occasionally be perceived or glimpsed, but the symphony is concerned above all with the striving towards it.

The work begins in a restless world of constant movement. Musical patterns repeat, overlap and proliferate, creating a sense of activity which is energetic and persistent but initially without clear purpose or direction. From this maelstrom, however, attempts gradually emerge to create something more individual, more conscious and more enduring. Larger musical structures rise above the surrounding activity, establishing moments of clarity, light and order before being challenged once again by the forces from which they have emerged.

The image behind the symphony is therefore not simply that of a Golden City waiting to receive those who arrive there. It is also the image of human beings struggling to create structures of meaning within the conditions of their own existence. The music repeatedly reaches upwards, attempting to establish what might be described as small towers of hope above the surrounding activity. These structures are never entirely secure and complete connection remains elusive, but the act of striving itself acquires meaning.

The question underlying the work is deliberately provocative: might enlightenment or redemption itself be understood as a kind of Darwinian struggle? Not as a reward granted from above, but as something which has to emerge, survive and continually reassert itself against the forces of ignorance, repetition and unconscious collective existence.

Swarna Nagari does not offer an easy vision of transcendence. Its affirmation lies instead in the continuing human attempt to rise, to create, to become conscious and, against considerable odds, to connect.

Discussion

Symphony No. 35, *Swarna Nagari – The Golden City*, is the third major work to emerge from Dafydd Bullock's experiences in India, but it takes the symphonic journey into a very different philosophical territory from either *Ganges* or *The Temple*. If *Ganges* responded to India through an overwhelming multiplicity of sounds, experiences and impressions, and *The Temple* contemplated the possibility that apparent opposites might ultimately belong to a deeper unity, *Swarna Nagari* returns to the most difficult and immediate of human questions: how, within the vast collective movement of existence, can an individual become conscious, establish meaning and attempt to reach beyond the conditions from which he or she has emerged?

The inspiration was a brief visit to the extraordinary model city - or perhaps model universe - at the Jain Museum in Ajmer. The experience did not result in a literal musical representation of what Bullock saw. Rather, the image of the Golden City became the starting point for a broader meditation upon transcendence and the possibility of reaching beyond the ordinary conditions of human existence. The Golden City might be heavenly, celestial, promised or enlightened; it might represent Nirvana, redemption or some other state in which the confusion and fragmentation of ordinary life are overcome. Yet the important point is that such a destination can rarely be perceived and still more rarely reached. The symphony is therefore concerned less with arrival than with the struggle towards it.

Its starting point is deliberately uncompromising. Bullock describes the condition from which the work emerges as the *"banal swamp of collective human existence"*, marked by ignorance and meaningless, repetitive activity. The opening music gives this conception a powerful physical form. Restless movement emerges and begins to generate a world in which activity is almost continuous. Patterns repeat, mutate and accumulate, creating an impression of energy and persistence without necessarily suggesting that the music is travelling towards a clear destination.

This distinction between movement and direction is central to the whole symphony. Activity is not necessarily progress, and repetition is not necessarily development. Human existence can be extraordinarily busy without becoming more conscious of itself. The music therefore begins in a state of motion which is energetic but not yet purposeful, a collective activity which threatens to absorb everything within its own repetitive processes.

From within this world, however, another possibility gradually begins to emerge. The symphony does not escape the maelstrom by abandoning it. Instead, attempts arise within it to establish something more individual, more structured and more enduring. Against the continuing horizontal movement of the surrounding activity, larger and increasingly substantial vertical gestures begin to assert themselves. Harmonic blocks, more powerful orchestral sonorities and moments of greater stability appear as attempts to create order within the movement rather than outside it.

Here one arrives at one of the most revealing images behind the work: the idea of "*making our little towers of hope"*. The phrase is significant precisely because it does not suggest permanent monuments or impregnable structures. These towers are precarious. They are attempts to rise above the swamp, to see further and to establish some kind of shape and meaning, but nothing guarantees their survival. The forces from which they emerge remain active around them, and the structures have continually to be defended or rebuilt.

The contrast between horizontal and vertical musical behaviour therefore becomes more than a matter of texture. It reflects two different conditions of existence. The horizontal movement represents the collective flow, the endless activity which carries everything onwards without

necessarily allowing it to rise. The vertical structures interrupt that flow. They stand, however briefly, against it. They reach upwards and attempt to establish coherence.

The image is almost architectural. Beneath lies the restless movement of the swamp, constantly renewing itself and threatening to absorb everything into its activity. Above it, structures begin to emerge. They establish weight, presence and direction. For a moment the music appears to have found a point from which it can look beyond the immediate conditions of its existence. Yet these moments are never permanently secure. The underlying movement remains, and the process of building must begin again.

This gives the symphony its distinctive emotional character. *Swarna Nagari* is not a conventional journey from darkness towards light, nor does it present enlightenment as the inevitable result of development. Every achievement remains vulnerable. Consciousness has to be fought for, and meaning has to be created and maintained. The possibility of rising above the collective does not abolish the collective itself.

It is in this context that Bullock's provocative question, "*Enlightenment and Redemption as a Darwinian struggle?"*, becomes central. The question mark is essential, because the work is not proposing a philosophical doctrine. Instead, it asks whether consciousness, individuality and meaning might themselves have to struggle for survival. Enlightenment is not presented as something granted from above to those who have followed the correct path. It must emerge from within the conditions of existence and establish itself against the forces which threaten to overwhelm it.

The Darwinian idea is therefore not narrowly biological. It concerns the struggle of higher possibilities to emerge and survive. Human beings are born into collective structures, habits and repetitions which existed before them and will continue after them. To become an individual, in the deeper sense intended here, is not simply to possess a separate body or personality. It is to become conscious of the world and to establish a relationship with it which is not entirely determined by the movement of the collective.

The symphony becomes, in this sense, a musical drama of **individuation.** The restless mass of activity continues, but increasingly substantial attempts are made to establish shape, direction and coherence within it. There are moments when the orchestra seems to cease merely moving and begins instead to reach upwards. These gestures do not always lead to fulfilment. The composer himself describes the process as one of *"always reaching, hardly ever connecting"*, and this may be one of the most revealing phrases in the conception of the work.

The music repeatedly reaches towards something which remains difficult to attain. The structures which rise above the maelstrom may stand briefly, but they do not necessarily connect with one another. They remain individual towers, separate attempts to establish light and meaning within a much larger and more powerful environment. There is something almost tragic in this image, but the symphony does not surrender to tragedy. The fact that the structures are temporary does not make their creation meaningless. On the contrary, the work seems to suggest that meaning may exist precisely in the act of creating them.

There is consequently something almost heroic about *Swarna Nagari*, although it is a heroism without the guarantee of victory. The symphony repeatedly attempts to establish moments of coherence against the continuing pressure of the surrounding activity. Sometimes these structures acquire enormous strength and seem capable of dominating their environment. At other moments the restless movement reasserts itself and the struggle begins again. Progress is possible, but it is never irreversible.

This places the work in an interesting relationship with the traditional symphonic idea of development. Classical symphonic form often creates the impression of purposeful movement towards resolution: themes are introduced, contrasted, transformed and eventually reconciled or brought to a conclusion. In *Swarna Nagari*, development is more precarious. The music can establish order, but that order remains vulnerable. It can rise, but it cannot permanently escape the conditions from which it rose. The process is therefore cyclical without being static, because each renewed attempt takes place after the experience of the previous one.

There is something almost Sisyphean in this continual necessity to begin again, but the symphony refuses to allow repetition to become synonymous with futility. Each attempt to build is an assertion of consciousness. Each upward gesture declares that the swamp is not the whole of reality. The fact that the Golden City may remain distant does not invalidate the effort to reach towards it.

Indeed, this is where the work becomes unexpectedly moving. It begins from a bleakly unsentimental view of collective human existence. There is no assumption that humanity is naturally progressing towards wisdom, enlightenment or redemption. Ignorance and meaningless repetition remain powerful conditions of existence, and the symphony never pretends that they can simply be wished away.

Yet neither does it accept pessimism as the final answer. Its refusal of pessimism does not take the form of an easy promise that everything will ultimately be well. Rather, it lies in the continuing willingness to strive. The music keeps attempting to rise. It keeps creating structures. It keeps reaching towards the possibility of connection.

The Golden City therefore becomes more than a destination. It becomes an image of possibility. It represents whatever may lie beyond the immediate conditions of unconscious existence: consciousness beyond repetition, individuality beyond absorption into the collective, structure beyond the maelstrom and connection beyond isolation. Whether it can actually be reached becomes, in one sense, almost secondary. The possibility of imagining it changes the nature of the struggle.

This helps explain the increasingly monumental character of the later stages of the symphony. The orchestra expands into great accumulations of sound, and the attempts to establish structure become more ambitious and more powerful. What began as a relatively fragile effort to rise above the surrounding activity develops into a struggle involving the full resources of the symphonic orchestra. Yet grandeur is not the same thing as arrival. The music continues to preserve the tension between aspiration and fulfilment, and the Golden City remains something which can perhaps be glimpsed more easily than possessed.

The conclusion is therefore particularly significant. After a symphony concerned with multiplicity, repetitive motion, separation and the difficulty of establishing meaningful structures, the final concentration of the orchestral forces suggests a moment in which the separate elements finally come together. For one brief but decisive instant, there is connection. The forces which have spent so much of the work moving, struggling and attempting to establish themselves against the surrounding activity are brought into a shared gesture.

This need not be understood as conventional redemption. The Golden City is not suddenly entered, and the previous struggle is not retrospectively revealed to have been a simple journey towards inevitable salvation. Such a conclusion would diminish the complexity of everything which precedes it. What the ending offers is more tentative and, for that reason, perhaps more convincing. It gives an experience of connection rather than a guarantee of permanent unity.

The Golden City may remain almost impossible to reach, but the symphony allows the possibility of what connection might feel like to become briefly real within the music itself. After all the separate attempts to rise and all the precarious towers of hope, the orchestra is, for a moment, gathered together. Then the work ends.

Seen alongside the two preceding Indian symphonies, *Swarna Nagari* completes a particularly striking sequence. *Ganges* is concerned with multiplicity: the overwhelming coexistence of human life, sound, history and experience. *The Temple* asks whether apparent opposites might ultimately dissolve into a deeper unity. *Swarna Nagari* places the human individual between those two possibilities. We begin within multiplicity, surrounded by forces greater than ourselves and frequently absorbed by their repetitive activity, yet we continue to struggle towards consciousness, individuality and the possibility of meaningful connection.

In this sense, No. 35 may be the most explicitly human of the three. The unity contemplated in *The Temple* lies beyond ordinary contradiction, whereas *Swarna Nagari* places us firmly within contradiction. We are collective creatures who struggle to become individuals. We inhabit repetition yet attempt to create meaning. We are small and temporary, yet we build towers. We may never reach the Golden City, but the fact that we can imagine it means that the swamp can never become the whole of our reality.

The symphony's affirmation is therefore hard won and deliberately uncertain. There is no guarantee of enlightenment, redemption or transcendence. The struggle may fail, the structures may collapse and complete connection may remain elusive. Yet the music insists upon the continuing possibility of striving towards something greater than the conditions in which we find ourselves.

That is ultimately where the meaning of *Swarna Nagari* lies. Not in the promise that humanity will inevitably arrive at a Golden City, but in the repeated attempt to rise above the maelstrom, to establish structures of light and meaning, to become conscious, to become individual and, against considerable odds, to connect. The towers may be small and precarious, and the city may remain distant, but the act of reaching towards it is itself an assertion that the movement of existence, however overwhelming, need not be meaningless.

Symphony No. 36 Op. 344

Programme Note

*Symphony No. 36 i*s written for solo violin and string orchestra. Written in Senheim, Germany at the end of December, 2023 - '*as the year fades away,'* it unfolds as a single, continuous movement. After the expansive orchestral and philosophical worlds of the preceding Indian symphonies, this work turns towards a more concentrated and inward form of expression, creating a musical journey from elegiac reflection through movement, intensity and fragmentation before returning to a profoundly altered stillness.

The symphony begins from within the string orchestra itself, with the lower and middle voices establishing a grave, singing world from which the solo violin gradually emerges. What follows is not a sequence of sharply contrasted themes or episodes, but a continuous process of transformation. The original melodic and rhythmic material is repeatedly reshaped, becoming increasingly animated, at times almost restless, before expanding into passages of broad and intense collective sonority.

Throughout the work there is a changing relationship between the individual and the ensemble. The solo violin is sometimes a leading voice, sometimes a distant presence and sometimes almost absorbed back into the larger body of strings. The orchestra itself moves between intimacy and monumentality, between energetic activity and moments of extraordinary openness and space.

After reaching its most substantial and concentrated sonorities, the music gradually begins to fragment and withdraw. Earlier material reappears, but never simply as a repetition of what has already been heard. It has been changed by the experience through which the symphony has passed. The final return to quietness is therefore not a return to the beginning, but an arrival at a stillness which has been earned.

The symphony closes with the solo violin and string orchestra gradually receding into an almost whispered silence, leaving the sense that the musical journey continues beyond the final sound.

Discussion

Symphony No. 36 occupies an intriguing position in Dafydd Bullock's symphonic sequence. Coming immediately after the three Indian symphonies, with their large orchestral forces and increasingly expansive philosophical concerns, it represents a sudden concentration of means. The orchestra is reduced to strings, with a solo violin assuming a distinctive but constantly changing role within the ensemble, and the entire work unfolds in a single continuous movement. Yet this reduction of resources does not suggest a diminution of ambition. On the contrary, the symphony explores a remarkably concentrated musical world in which a relatively small body of material is subjected to continual transformation.

The work begins in an elegiac atmosphere, but even this description needs qualification. The opening is grave and reflective, with the musical line initially emerging from within the lower and middle registers of the string orchestra rather than being immediately presented by the solo violin. This is important to the symphony's conception. The individual voice does not arrive from outside as a conventional concerto protagonist. Instead, it gradually emerges from a collective musical body which already possesses its own expressive identity.

The opening material is lyrical, with long-breathed phrases and a characteristic rhythmic profile which will continue to influence the development of the work. There is melancholy here, but not inertia. The lines rise and fall with an underlying sense of movement, as though the music, even at its most reflective, is already searching for a direction beyond the condition in which it begins. When the solo violin gradually enters the texture, it does not overturn this world. It becomes part of it, extending and illuminating material which has already been established by the ensemble.

This relationship between the individual and the collective remains one of the most interesting aspects of the symphony. The solo violin is not consistently placed in front of the orchestra. At different moments it leads, comments, withdraws or is almost absorbed into the larger sonority. The expressive centre of gravity is therefore continually changing. Sometimes an individual line appears to emerge from the mass of strings; at other times the full orchestra acquires a collective expressive force which makes the solo voice seem almost fragile by comparison.

As the symphony develops, the initially spacious character of the music begins to acquire greater rhythmic energy. *Pizzicato* passages and increasingly active writing introduce a new sense of movement, while the longer melodic lines remain present within or above the changing texture. The effect is not that of an entirely new idea being introduced, but of the original musical material discovering another aspect of its own nature. The elegiac world has begun to move.

This is characteristic of the work as a whole. *Symphony No. 36* is less concerned with the contrast between separate musical subjects than with the capacity of a single musical personality to change its form. One idea appears to generate another; a rhythmic gesture which initially seems subsidiary becomes increasingly important; a lyrical line becomes fragmented or absorbed into a larger harmonic texture. The music develops organically, as though its later stages were already latent within its opening.

The increasing activity eventually produces a more intense and concentrated musical world. Inner parts become particularly active, creating movement beneath and around the broader lines of the outer voices. There is a fascinating coexistence here between different senses of time. One layer of the orchestra maintains the spacious, singing character inherited from the opening, while another generates a more urgent and insistent movement. The symphony therefore becomes increasingly tense without abandoning its original emotional identity.

The subsequent broadening of the orchestral texture marks one of the work's most significant transformations. The earlier activity does not simply disappear; rather, it seems to accumulate until it becomes capable of generating larger and more substantial sonorities. The string orchestra gathers into broad harmonic structures of considerable emotional weight. What began as an inward and almost private utterance acquires a collective dimension.

This is one of the points at which the relationship between soloist and ensemble is most effectively reversed. At the beginning, the larger body of strings generated the musical material from which the solo violin gradually emerged. Here the orchestra itself becomes the principal expressive force, capable of creating sonorities which are far larger than the individual voice. The solo violin rises above or moves through this landscape, but it no longer appears to define the work's entire perspective.

The emotional intensity of this central region is particularly striking because it grows organically from the material which preceded it. Nothing has been imported from another musical world. The earlier elegiac character has simply deepened and enlarged. Movement has accumulated into sonority, and individual expression has expanded into collective utterance.

Yet the symphony does not remain at this level of intensity. One of its most satisfying structural qualities lies in its refusal simply to continue towards an ever larger climax. After the music has achieved substantial density and weight, the texture begins to open and fragment. *Pizzicato* and more transparent writing return, while the individual instruments exchange and redistribute fragments of the material.

This process feels less like relaxation after a climax than like examination. The symphony begins to take its own material apart. What had previously existed as a powerful collective sonority is separated into individual gestures and lines. The listener is invited to hear the material again under more exposed conditions.

The resulting spaces are among the most distinctive passages in the work. After the earlier density, the relative emptiness of the texture acquires considerable expressive force. Individual lines emerge with greater clarity, silences and sustained resonances become more significant, and the solo violin once again assumes a conspicuous role. The music appears to have passed through its period of greatest intensity and emerged into a landscape where everything can be heard more clearly.

This does not, however, constitute a simple return to the opening. The symphony's material has already undergone too much transformation for that to be possible. When earlier gestures return, they carry the memory of what has happened between their first appearance and their re-emergence. This is one of the fundamental characteristics of Bullock's larger musical thinking: return is rarely mere repetition. The music may revisit an earlier emotional or structural condition, but it cannot become innocent of its own history.

The later stages of *Symphony No. 36* therefore create a sense of reassembly rather than recapitulation. Rhythmic and melodic energies begin to return, and the ensemble gradually gathers itself again. The solo violin becomes increasingly prominent, but the relationship between individual and collective has changed. The instrument no longer emerges into an unknown world; it carries with it the experience of everything through which the music has passed.

The return of broader harmonic sonority later in the work is equally transformed. The orchestra once again achieves a collective weight, but this is no longer the same moment of expansion heard earlier. The perspective has altered. The music has passed through fragmentation and exposure, and the renewed concentration of sound is correspondingly quieter and more reflective.

The symphony's final pages complete this process of transformation and return. Rather than building towards a conventional final assertion, the music gradually withdraws. The larger sonorities diminish, the texture becomes increasingly delicate and the solo violin rises above an ever more fragile orchestral background. Eventually, the entire musical world is reduced to the quietest possible degree of presence before disappearing into silence.

The ending is particularly significant because it resembles, in emotional atmosphere, the inward-looking world from which the symphony began. Yet it is not a return in any literal sense. The opening stillness belonged to a world whose possibilities had not yet been explored. The final stillness belongs to music which has passed through movement, agitation, collective intensity, fragmentation and renewal. The two silences therefore mean different things.

One might say that the entire symphony is concerned with the transformation of an elegiac idea through experience. The opening contains the essential musical personality of the work, but that personality must discover its capacity for movement, intensity, collective expression, fragmentation and withdrawal before it can finally return to a condition of quietness. The journey is not one from darkness towards conventional triumph, nor from tension towards simple resolution. It is a process in which musical material discovers what it can become.

The choice of solo violin and string orchestra is particularly well suited to this conception. The homogeneity of the string sound allows ideas to pass naturally from one register and instrumental group to another, while the solo violin provides the possibility of an individual voice emerging from, commenting upon or disappearing back into the collective. The distinction between soloist and orchestra is therefore constantly negotiated rather than permanently established.

This gives *Symphony No. 36* an unusual dramatic subtlety. The central question is not whether the individual will triumph over the collective, or whether one force will defeat another. Instead, the work continually explores the changing relationship between the one and the many. At times the individual voice seems capable of rising above the surrounding body; at others it appears inseparable from it. The orchestra itself can become a single expressive organism, while individual lines emerge from within it like remembered thoughts or voices.

After the enormous conceptual landscapes of the Indian symphonies, there is something almost cleansing about the concentration of No. 36. It does not attempt to encompass a river, a temple, the dissolution of opposites or a vision of humanity struggling towards a Golden City. Its subject is more elusive and more purely musical: the capacity of a small body of material to pass through experience and emerge changed. For that reason, the work's apparent simplicity is deceptive. Beneath its restricted forces and single-movement form lies a carefully balanced journey from inward reflection towards activity and collective intensity, through fragmentation and renewed assembly, and finally towards a stillness which is recognisably related to the beginning but profoundly altered by everything that has taken place.

Symphony No. 36 therefore seems to offer a particularly concentrated expression of an idea which has become increasingly characteristic of Bullock's later symphonic writing. Music may return, but it does not return unchanged. Memory becomes part of the structure. Every recurrence carries with it the experience of what has happened in between.

The final silence is consequently not an ending imposed upon the music from outside. It feels like the inevitable consequence of the journey. The symphony has explored the possibilities contained within its opening material, allowed them to expand, collide, intensify and fragment, and finally brought them back into a state of extraordinary quietness. Nothing is quite where it was at the beginning and yet, somehow, everything remains recognisable.

Symphony No. 37 Op. 350

The Return

Programme Note

Symphony No. 37, The Return, is a four-movement work whose titles suggest a journey through four contrasting states: *The Journey, Distractions, The Stars* and *The Return*. The sequence may invite many interpretations. It is not intended as autobiography or as a literal narrative, but rather offers a series of images through which the listener may find a personal path through the music.

The **first movement,** *The Journey*, begins from a relatively restrained musical gesture and gradually expands into a broader and more varied orchestral landscape. Movement, direction and changing terrain become central elements of its character, as musical ideas are transformed through contrasting tempi, metres and orchestral colours. The journey does not proceed in a straight line, and its destination remains deliberately undefined.

Distractions introduces a more volatile and energetic world. Rapid changes of direction, shifting rhythms and constantly changing orchestral textures create a sense of movement continually diverted by new impulses. The title may suggest temptation, interruption, pleasure, excitement or simply the innumerable experiences which can draw any journey away from its original course.

The **third movement**, *The Stars*, offers a striking contrast. Time seems to expand, and the music moves into a broader, more spacious world of sustained sonorities and long perspectives. After the activity of the preceding movements, this music seems to invite contemplation, distance and a change of scale.

In **the finale,** *The Return*, the journey turns once again towards its point of origin. Yet a return cannot simply restore the original state. Whatever interpretation the listener places upon the work, the intervening experiences have changed the perspective from which the return is made. Musical ideas and gestures may recall earlier parts of the symphony, but they now carry the memory of the journey, its distractions and the vast stillness of the stars.

The symphony ultimately leaves open the question of what, precisely, it means to return. One may return to a place, a person, an idea, a state of mind, or perhaps to oneself. The return may be joyful, uncertain, peaceful or simply inevitable. The music does not impose an answer, but suggests that the meaning of any return depends upon the journey which has preceded it.

Senheim, Germany, April 2024

Discussion

Symphony No. 37, The Return, is one of the most clearly conceived four-movement designs in Dafydd Bullock's later symphonic sequence. Its four titles - *The Journey*, *Distractions*, *The Stars* and *The Return* - are not simply descriptive labels attached to four contrasting movements. Together they establish a sequence of experiences whose meaning accumulates across the entire work. Departure is followed by diversion, diversion by contemplation, and contemplation by return. Yet the symphony deliberately avoids defining the precise nature of the journey or the destination. Its imagery is sufficiently open to allow widely differing interpretations, and the work should not be understood as autobiographical or as the narration of a specific event. Rather, it offers a musical architecture within which the listener may recognise many different kinds of journey and return.

The **first movement,** *The Journey*, begins without any grand announcement of departure. The music emerges relatively sparingly, initially from the lower strings, and gradually establishes a sense of movement before the orchestral world expands around it. This is an important feature of the movement's character. The journey is not imposed upon the listener as an already completed idea. It begins almost as an act of discovery, with one gesture leading to another and the musical direction gradually becoming clearer as the surrounding landscape expands.

As the movement progresses, the orchestra becomes increasingly involved and the music passes through changing states of energy, density and colour. There are accelerations, transformations of metre and substantial expansions of the orchestral texture, but the movement does not follow the simple trajectory of a journey steadily approaching a known destination. Instead, its sense of progress lies in continual transformation. Musical energy changes direction, broad gestures emerge from more intimate material, and passages of activity are followed by moments in which the texture opens and the sense of movement is temporarily suspended.

This creates the impression of a journey through changing terrain, although the terrain need not be understood literally. It may be physical, psychological, imaginative or entirely abstract. What matters is the sense that movement exposes the traveller - or, musically, the material - to different conditions. The journey is not merely a means of getting from one place to another. It is itself the source of experience and transformation.

The movement therefore establishes a principle which remains important throughout the symphony: movement does not necessarily mean straightforward progress. One may move quickly and still not arrive; one may pause and nevertheless be transformed. Direction can be lost and rediscovered. The journey develops not through the certainty of its destination but through the experiences encountered along the way.

The **second movement**, *Distractions*, takes this possibility of diverted movement and makes it the central subject of the music. Its faster pace, restless rhythms and rapidly changing orchestral textures immediately create a world quite different from the more exploratory character of the opening movement. There is an energy here which seems continually to be drawn in new directions. Material appears, develops and is interrupted; instrumental groups emerge briefly before yielding to others; changes of metre and momentum prevent the music from settling into a single, predictable course.

The title is deliberately suggestive. A distraction may be an obstacle, but it may equally be a pleasure. It may represent temptation, interruption, excitement, curiosity or the simple fact that a journey through life - or indeed through any sustained experience - is rarely conducted according to

plan. The movement does not treat distraction as something necessarily negative. Its energy is often exhilarating, and the diversions themselves become part of the richness of the journey.

Indeed, one might argue that the distinction between journey and distraction is itself unstable. What initially appears to take us away from our intended direction may eventually become one of the experiences which defines the journey. The second movement therefore possesses a kind of centrifugal energy. Instead of constantly driving towards a central goal, the music repeatedly moves sideways, outward and away from whatever stability it seems momentarily to have achieved.

Yet the movement does not dissolve into chaos. Beneath its volatility there remains a strong sense of musical identity. The material may be continually redirected, but the diversions belong to the same larger world as the journey itself. They interrupt the route without breaking the coherence of the symphony.

The transition to the **third movement,** *The Stars*, consequently represents much more than a conventional change of tempo or mood. After the restless activity of *Distractions*, the symphony enters a world in which time itself appears to behave differently. Sustained sonorities, long lines and spacious orchestral textures replace the constantly changing impulses of the preceding movement. The result is music of remarkable breadth and distance.

The title naturally invites visual associations, but its significance seems to extend beyond the image of a night sky. The stars suggest a change of scale. After the activity, uncertainty and diversions of the human journey, the music suddenly encounters something vast, distant and apparently beyond immediate concern. Whether one interprets this as contemplation, wonder, cosmic perspective, memory or simply a moment of stillness is left entirely open.

What is clear is that the movement changes the relationship between the listener and everything which has preceded it. The restless activity of *Distractions* is not denied or cancelled, but it is placed within a much larger perspective. Things which seemed urgent may now appear smaller; movement which previously seemed all-important is suspended within a broader field of time and space.

This is the particular achievement of *The Stars*. It does not simply provide a slow movement between two faster or more active ones. It alters the scale on which the symphony is understood. The journey is no longer merely the experience of moving from one place to another. It is placed within a wider perspective in which distance, stillness and duration become equally important.

The music of the movement can develop considerable emotional intensity, but its expansiveness remains fundamentally different from the dramatic accumulations of the first movement or the restless propulsion of the second. Even when the orchestra gathers in strength, there is a sense of space around the sound. The movement seems less concerned with arriving somewhere than with inhabiting a particular state of awareness.

Only after this expansion of perspective can the **final movement**, *The Return*, begin. The return is introduced without triumphal certainty. The music does not announce a grand homecoming, nor does it suggest that the journey has solved every problem encountered along the way. Instead, the return itself has to find its path. The movement begins relatively quietly and gradually gathers material and energy, passing through changing states which recall, without literally reproducing, aspects of the earlier journey.

This is where the symphony's larger cyclical conception becomes particularly powerful. A return is recognisable as a return precisely because something has preceded it, but it cannot restore the

original condition. The person - or idea, or musical material - which returns is no longer in the same relationship to its point of departure. The intervening journey has become part of its identity.

This principle is expressed throughout the final movement. Earlier kinds of musical behaviour re-emerge, but they are now heard through the memory of everything which has happened. The movement carries within it the exploratory motion of the first movement, the volatility and diversions of the second, and the altered perspective of the third. These experiences do not need to appear as literal quotations in order to influence the meaning of the return. They have changed the context in which every subsequent gesture is heard.

The title itself remains deliberately open. To return may mean to come back to a physical place, but it may equally mean to return to a relationship, an idea, a remembered state, a home, a language, a landscape or a part of oneself. A return may bring relief, disappointment, joy, recognition or uncertainty. It may be voluntary or inevitable. One may even discover, on returning, that the place one imagined as fixed has changed as much as the traveller.

The symphony does not insist upon one of these interpretations. Its achievement lies in allowing the musical process to suggest the complexity of return without translating it into a specific narrative. The listener is invited to bring his or her own experiences to the sequence of departure, diversion, contemplation and return.

This openness is particularly important to the work's conclusion. After the increasingly substantial activity of the final movement, the symphony does not simply gather its forces for a blazing declaration of victory. Instead, the music eventually turns away from accumulation and moves towards a quieter conclusion. The return is therefore not presented as conquest. There is no need for a final proclamation that the journey has succeeded. The modesty of the ending is one of its strengths. The journey simply comes to rest.

That simplicity, however, carries considerable significance. The final destination may be familiar, but familiarity does not mean that nothing has changed. The symphony's entire structure has prepared us to understand that the point of return and the point of departure can never be experienced in quite the same way. Between them lie movement, diversion and the perspective acquired by looking beyond immediate concerns.

In this respect, *Symphony No. 37* develops an idea which has become increasingly important in Bullock's later symphonic thinking: return is not repetition. Music can revisit earlier territory, but the journey through time changes the meaning of what is revisited. The same gesture, harmony or emotional condition acquires a different significance because the listener remembers what has intervened.

The four movements of *The Return* therefore form a continuous argument. *The Journey* establishes movement and departure, but without defining the destination. *Distractions* demonstrates how movement can be redirected, enriched or complicated by forces which draw us away from an intended path. *The Stars* offers a moment of distance and altered perspective, expanding the scale upon which the journey can be understood. Finally, *The Return* brings the process towards a point of arrival without pretending that arrival can undo experience.

There is a quiet philosophical depth in this sequence, although the symphony wisely avoids reducing itself to a philosophical statement. Its titles suggest possibilities rather than provide explanations. One listener may hear the work as a reflection upon travel, another upon relationships, memory or the movement of a life; another may experience it entirely as an abstract symphonic journey. All of these responses are possible because the music does not demand a single interpretation.

What remains constant is the relationship between experience and perspective. The journey changes the traveller. Distractions, however inconvenient or pleasurable, become part of what has been experienced. Contemplation alters the scale on which those experiences are viewed. When the return finally takes place, nothing can be exactly as it was. The destination may be the same - but he return is not. This is perhaps the central point of *Symphony No. 37*. To come back is not to go backwards. The journey remains present within the return, and everything encountered along the way continues to resonate long after the movement itself has come to rest.

Symphony No. 38 Op. 356

Fjorden

Programme Note

Begun on board the *Havila Castor* in October 2024 during an epic journey along the Norwegian coast from Bergen to Kirkenes and back, and completed in Germany in early November, *Symphony No. 38, Fjorden*, is a one-movement work inspired by days and nights spent travelling through some of the most extraordinary surroundings imaginable.

The symphony is not intended as a description of any particular fjord. Rather, it creates a composite, imagined fjord containing impressions, memories, sounds and experiences gathered during the journey. Its underlying formal idea is simple: like the ship itself, the music enters the fjord, experiences what is found there, and eventually leaves again.

Within this musical landscape are several distinct elements. Norwegian folk music appears in the form of *Bruremarsj fra Sørfold*, a wedding melody heard at a midnight concert in Tromsø, alongside an almost folk-song invented by the composer. There are occasional harmonic flavours and shadows of Grieg, not as quotation or imitation but as part of the musical atmosphere of the Norwegian journey. The harp evokes the magical and energising experience of the Northern Lights, while the changing sea provides a continuing and unpredictable presence: at times calm and almost motionless, at others decidedly more animated, with a swell to say the least.

The journey into and out of the fjord provides more than a simple programme. What is encountered within it becomes part of the music's larger continuity. Landscape, weather, sea, memory, folk music, invention, human presence and the immense spaces of the Norwegian coast all enter the same musical world.

In the end, the ship leaves the fjord, and the music leaves with it. Yet what has been experienced remains. The fjord is both entered and left; the journey begins and ends; sound emerges from silence and returns to it. Perhaps, from another perspective, these apparent opposites are not opposites at all, but simply different moments within the same continuous experience.

Fjorden was composed in Senheim, Germany, from sketches made in Norway in October and November 2024.

Discussion

Symphony No. 38, Fjorden, is the product of a journey, but it is not a travelogue. Begun on board the *Havila Castor* during a voyage from Bergen to Kirkenes and back along the Norwegian coast in October 2024, and completed in Senheim during the following month, the symphony gathers together impressions from days and nights spent moving through an environment of extraordinary visual and physical power. Yet the resulting work is not an attempt to translate a particular sequence of destinations into music. Instead, Bullock creates what might be called a composite or generic fjord: an imagined space containing landscapes, sounds, weather, memories, folk music, invented melody, the Northern Lights and the changing movement of the sea.

At the heart of the symphony lies a remarkably simple formal idea. The music enters a fjord and eventually leaves it again. This image gives the entire one-movement structure its underlying direction. Just as the *Havila Castor* repeatedly moved from the open sea into the enclosed spaces of the Norwegian fjords and later emerged again, so the music itself passes from one state into another. It enters, experiences, changes, gathers impressions and eventually leaves. Yet the apparent simplicity of this process conceals a much richer idea, because the fjord itself becomes a world containing many different forms of experience.

The opening immediately establishes the extraordinary spaciousness of that world. The full orchestra is available, but much of it remains silent. Quiet, widely separated string gestures emerge within an enormous field of potential sound. The impression is not of an orchestra waiting to begin in the conventional symphonic sense. Rather, it feels as though the musical landscape already exists and the listener has entered it.

This is one of the most important characteristics of *Fjorden*. Space is not simply the background against which events take place. Space is itself an active part of the music. Silence has weight, and the absence of sound is as significant as the arrival of sound. Individual instruments and groups emerge gradually, often from an environment which remains far larger than the musical gesture itself.

The fjord is therefore not represented by pictorial imitation. There is no attempt to reproduce a particular mountain, cliff, harbour or stretch of water. Instead, the proportions of the music begin to suggest the experience of being within a landscape whose scale alters one's perception of movement. Things happen, but they happen within something much larger.

The early stages of the work gradually allow more of the orchestra to enter this space. Winds and brass appear quietly, and the string texture begins to acquire greater activity. What is particularly striking is that the orchestra does not seem simply to grow from small forces towards large ones. The larger world is present from the beginning. Much of it is merely silent.

This creates an unusual relationship between sound and silence. The symphony seems to reveal what was already there rather than constructing a world from nothing. A brass sonority, a new instrumental colour or an energetic passage appears as an event within an existing landscape.

As the music develops, movement becomes increasingly important. There are passages in which the orchestra gathers considerable energy, with active strings, increasingly substantial brass and stronger rhythmic propulsion. Yet this activity never entirely replaces the earlier spaciousness. The landscape remains larger than the movement occurring within it.

Here the symphony captures something essential about travel by sea. The ship is continually moving, sometimes with great energy, but the experience of movement itself is not always one of acceleration. At times the journey may seem almost suspended, with calm water and immense surrounding space making the movement of the ship feel imperceptible. At other moments the sea asserts itself with considerably greater force.

Bullock incorporates this contrast directly into the changing physical character of the music. The sea is not merely an image occasionally introduced into the symphony; its varying conditions become part of the work's internal behaviour. Calm and swell, suspension and propulsion, spaciousness and activity continually alternate. The journey is therefore experienced not as a straight line but as a constantly changing relationship between movement and the environment through which that movement takes place.

One of the most important moments in the symphony occurs with the appearance of *Bruremarsj fra Sørfold*. This Norwegian wedding melody was heard by the composer at a midnight concert in Tromsø during the journey itself. Its inclusion gives the work a particularly vivid connection with lived experience, but its function is much more than documentary. Until this point, the musical world has been dominated by landscape, sea, movement and space. With the arrival of the folk melody, another dimension enters: human presence. The fjords are not empty. They contain histories, communities, ceremonies and memories. A melody associated with celebration and human gathering appears within the immense environment of the symphony.

There is something particularly moving about this encounter between the human and the vast. The folk melody does not overwhelm the landscape, nor does the landscape absorb and erase the melody. Both coexist. Human culture and immense natural space become elements within the same musical world.

Alongside the *Bruremarsj* is another important melodic element: an almost folk-song invented by Bullock himself. This is especially characteristic of the symphony's larger conception, because it deliberately blurs the distinction between what was encountered and what was created. The heard melody and the imagined melody belong together. Memory and invention become difficult to separate.

That, in turn, suggests that *Fjorden* is not concerned with reproducing Norway exactly as it was experienced. The act of composition has already transformed experience. A journey has been remembered, absorbed and recreated. The resulting fjord is therefore neither a particular geographical location nor an entirely abstract musical construction. It is a space in which experience and imagination meet.

The occasional harmonic flavours of Grieg operate in a similar way. They are not presented as direct homage or quotation, nor does the symphony become an exercise in stylistic imitation. Instead, certain harmonic colours allow the wider history of Norwegian music to enter the work almost as part of its atmosphere. They are memories within a memory, musical associations awakened by the place itself.

This makes *Fjorden* unusually rich in its treatment of cultural experience. The landscape is present, but so are the people who inhabit it. The sea is present, but so are melodies heard in a midnight concert. Norwegian musical history enters alongside an invented folk-song. The symphony does not separate these experiences into categories. Everything encountered during the journey becomes available to the same musical imagination.

The Northern Lights provide another particularly vivid element. Here the harp assumes a distinctive role, evoking the magical and energising experience of the aurora. Yet, once again, the music does

not simply attempt a visual transcription. The harp's presence introduces another kind of energy into the orchestral world: a shimmer, an illumination and an animation which seem to arise from within the larger musical space.

This is important because the Northern Lights themselves challenge ordinary ideas of stability. Something apparently distant and almost immaterial can suddenly become overwhelming in its visual presence. Light moves, changes and disappears, while the landscape beneath remains. The harp's role therefore contributes to the symphony's wider fascination with events which appear, transform the experience of a space and then vanish.

Throughout the work, this process of appearance and disappearance becomes increasingly significant. Musical activity can gather into substantial orchestral masses before withdrawing again. A melody emerges from the surrounding texture, acquires temporary prominence and is absorbed into further transformation. The full orchestra may create moments of great force, only for the music to return once more to sparsity and silence.

The symphony therefore never simply accumulates towards a single overwhelming destination. Its structure is more fluid and more geographical. We are continually moving through different regions of the same imagined world. This brings us back to the central image of entering and leaving the fjord. On the surface, this might appear to provide the work with a straightforward directional narrative. We begin outside, enter, experience what lies within and eventually emerge again. But the more one considers the conception, the more complicated this distinction becomes. What is outside and what is inside?

The ship enters the fjord, but the fjord is connected to the sea from which it has come. The music moves from one state to another, but each state grows from material already present. The journey from Bergen to Kirkenes and back has a beginning and an end, yet the sea continues before the journey begins and after it finishes.

Here *Fjorden* comes surprisingly close to the philosophical territory explored in *The Temple*, the second of Bullock's Indian symphonies. There, the composer was concerned with the possibility that apparent opposites - up and down, past and future, beginning and ending - might ultimately be understood as aspects of a deeper unity. The same idea hovers, perhaps less explicitly but no less suggestively, around *Fjorden*. The ship enters the fjord and leaves it, the music begins and ends, sound emerges from silence and returns to it and the journey moves outward and then returns.

Yet from another perspective, perhaps nothing has been divided in the first place. Entering and leaving are simply different directions of movement within the same continuous world. Beginning and ending are points we impose upon an experience which itself extends beyond them. The sea outside the fjord and the water within it belong to the same greater whole. In this sense, there is indeed something almost Hindu in the underlying conception, although the symphony does not require such a philosophical interpretation. The work's Norwegian imagery remains entirely concrete and immediate. It is about a ship, a coast, folk music, weather, sea, light and landscape. But beneath these experiences lies a recognition that the boundaries we perceive may be less absolute than they appear. The fjord is entered and left - but the water remains.

This perspective also gives the symphony's conclusion particular significance. As the work approaches its final pages, the orchestral activity gradually diminishes. The larger forces withdraw and the spacious character of the opening returns. Quiet, widely separated gestures once again occupy an environment in which silence is increasingly important. At first hearing, this may suggest a return to the point from which the symphony began. But, as in the preceding *Symphony No. 37,* return is not repetition. At the beginning, the silence belonged to a world which had not yet been experienced - and by the end, the silence contains the memory of everything that has happened.

Between these two states lie the changing seas, the movement of the ship, the folk melody heard in Tromsø, the imagined folk-song, the harmonic memories of Grieg, the Northern Lights and the accumulated impressions of days and nights along the Norwegian coast. None of these things is literally present at the end, yet all have changed the silence into which the music returns. The distinction is subtle but fundamental. The final quietness is not empty because the experience has disappeared. It is full because the experience has become memory.

This gives Symphony No. 38 a particularly satisfying architectural form. The music begins in immense space, enters a world of movement and experience, and eventually emerges once again into space. Yet the two spaces are not the same. The symphony has travelled between them - or perhaps, from another perspective, they have always been the same space.

That ambiguity seems central to the work. *Fjorden* can be heard as a journey through a spectacular Norwegian landscape, as a musical memory of a particular voyage, as an encounter between human culture and natural immensity, or as a more abstract meditation upon movement, experience and return. None of these interpretations excludes the others. The work is strongest precisely because it allows them to coexist. The folk melody and the invented melody, the human and the natural, the calm sea and the violent swell, the open sea and the enclosed fjord, silence and orchestral mass, entering and leaving - all become part of the same continuous musical experience. The symphony does not need to resolve these apparent opposites, they can exist together.

Perhaps that is where the deepest connection with the philosophical world of the Indian symphonies can be found. *Fjorden* does not preach unity or attempt to explain it. It discovers unity through experience. The music enters the fjord, moves through its changing worlds and eventually leaves again, only to arrive at a point where beginning and ending seem less opposed than they once did. The ship passes, the sea continues and the music remembers. At this point the distinction between entering and leaving begins to dissolve into the larger continuity from which both arose.

Symphony No. 39 Op. 359

Dresden

Programme Note

Written immediately after the composer's first visit to Dresden in April and May 2025, *Symphony No. 39* is a three-movement work inspired by the history, destruction and reconstruction of the city, but also by a wider sense of grief and shame at the continuing destruction of human lives and cities.
The **first movement** begins in a world of deep sadness and unease. Although Dresden is the immediate point of departure, the music is not concerned with history as something safely confined to the past. The destruction of one city inevitably suggests all the others which have suffered before and since. The movement gradually develops in intensity, but its underlying emotional character remains one of grief, apprehension and a sense of humanity's continuing failure to escape its own destructive impulses.

The short **second movement** is violent and concentrated. It evokes the horror of the firestorm and the destruction of Dresden, not as a spectacle but as an overwhelming rupture. The music is compressed, brutal and unstable, creating a moment from which the symphony cannot simply return to its previous state.

The **third movement** begins after the catastrophe, in shock and dislocation. From this fractured landscape emerge brief evocations of Baroque and Classical musical styles, though never quite correctly. These passages reflect the reconstruction of Dresden's historic centre and the extraordinary reappearance of architectural beauty. Yet the past cannot simply be restored. The historical musical languages are recognisable but altered, and beneath them remains a continuing sense of terror and loss.

In the final section, material from the first movement returns in further development. The symphony does not end in triumph or conventional consolation. Reconstruction, survival and beauty are present, but they cannot erase what has happened. The final emotion is one of profound sadness.

Symphony No. 39 is therefore both a response to Dresden and a wider meditation upon destruction, memory and the human capacity simultaneously to create, destroy and rebuild.

Discussion

Symphony No. 39, Dresden, is a particularly serious and concentrated work in Dafydd Bullock's later symphonic sequence. After the immense spaces and almost philosophical continuity of the Norwegian *Symphony No. 38, Fjorden*, this music enters a far more specifically historical landscape. Its subject is a city whose name has become inseparable from destruction, but the symphony is not simply an historical reconstruction of the bombing of Dresden. The events of February 1945 form its emotional centre, yet the work immediately extends beyond them. Dresden becomes one instance of a larger and continuing human tragedy: the destruction of cities, the loss of lives and the apparently inexhaustible capacity of humanity to repeat what it already knows to be terrible.

The composer's own description of the first movement is particularly revealing. It is concerned not only with sadness, but with a sense of universal shame. That distinction is important. Grief may arise from witnessing suffering; shame implies a deeper awareness of human responsibility. The symphony does not approach Dresden as an isolated catastrophe belonging to another age and another generation. It confronts the uncomfortable fact that the destruction of Dresden belongs to a history which has never truly ended.

The work's dedication, *für Manfred Pasieka, der alles gesehen hat - "for Manfred Pasieka, who saw everything"* - places an individual witness at the threshold of this larger historical subject. Against the vast scale of destruction, there is one person who saw, remembered and survived. The symphony therefore begins not with statistics or historical abstraction, but with the possibility of human memory.

The **first movement** opens in an atmosphere of remarkable restraint. The orchestral world is initially sparse, with subdued gestures emerging from the lower strings while much of the orchestra remains silent. This is not simply an introduction before the drama begins. The silence and emptiness are already part of the movement's emotional argument. There is a sense of something difficult to articulate, as though the music were attempting to approach an experience which resists ordinary expression.

The melodic fragments do not immediately establish a confident or expansive symphonic direction. Instead, they seem tentative, burdened and reflective. Gradually, other orchestral forces enter and the musical texture becomes increasingly substantial, but the sadness of the opening remains at the centre of the movement. Even when the music gathers force, its energy does not become heroic. It seems weighted by the knowledge of what human beings are capable of doing.

This is one of the movement's most disturbing qualities. Violence does not arrive from an entirely separate musical world. The more forceful and agitated material grows out of the same emotional landscape that produced the opening sadness. Grief and violence are therefore connected rather than opposed. One seems to contain the possibility of the other.

The first movement establishes a condition of apprehension without yet presenting the catastrophe directly. Dresden is already present as memory and as historical knowledge, but the movement's wider significance lies in the fact that the listener cannot regard that knowledge as belonging exclusively to the past. The sadness reaches beyond one city. It is sadness for destruction already known and destruction which, even now, continues elsewhere.

The **second movement** provides the rupture towards which the first has been moving. Short, violent and intensely concentrated, it evokes the firestorm and destruction of Dresden with almost no

possibility of emotional distance. The orchestra becomes explosive and unstable. Sharp accents, rapidly moving figures and violent orchestral interjections create a musical world in which continuity itself appears to be under attack. There is no attempt to transform catastrophe into a spectacular orchestral display. The violence is too compressed and too brutal for that. It is not grand; it is destructive.

The brevity of the movement is, in itself, significant. Catastrophe can occur with terrifying speed. What takes hours or moments to destroy may require generations to remember, understand or rebuild. The second movement therefore does not function as a conventional symphonic climax after which the music can gradually recover its balance. It creates a break. Everything which follows must exist in the knowledge that this destruction has taken place.

The opening of the **third movement** makes this immediately apparent. After the violence, the musical landscape is fragmented and dislocated. Isolated instrumental voices emerge within a greatly reduced orchestral space. There is no immediate attempt to restore order. The music seems to be finding its bearings after an event which has destroyed the continuity that preceded it. This is shock - yet from this fractured beginning, another musical world gradually begins to emerge. It is here that the symphony introduces one of its most original and telling ideas: brief evocations of Baroque and Classical styles which are, in the composer's words, *"not quite correct"*.

The qualification is essential. These passages are not historical pastiche, nor are they nostalgic attempts to recreate an idealised Dresden of the past. Their very slight wrongness is part of their meaning. The music reaches towards recognisable historical forms and gestures, but it cannot entirely inhabit them. Something has happened between the historical style being remembered and the present moment in which it is reconstructed.

This creates a remarkably effective parallel with the rebuilding of Dresden itself. The city's historic centre has been reconstructed with extraordinary care, allowing some of its great architectural forms to reappear. Beauty, continuity and historical identity have been restored. Yet reconstruction cannot turn time backwards. The rebuilt city is not the city that stood before its destruction. The new beauty exists alongside the knowledge of what was lost.

The third movement understands this paradox musically. The Baroque and Classical gestures offer moments of order, elegance and recognisable cultural memory, but they are never permitted to become entirely innocent. They emerge from a landscape already transformed by violence. Even when the music becomes lighter or more regular in shape, the listener carries the memory of the second movement.The terror remains in the background.

This gives the reconstruction its emotional ambiguity. Beauty is present, and the human capacity to rebuild is affirmed, but neither beauty nor reconstruction can erase history. Indeed, reconstruction itself becomes a reminder of what made it necessary.As the third movement develops, these historical evocations begin to coexist with more obviously contemporary elements of the symphony's own musical language. Fragments acquire greater coherence, textures become more substantial and moments of life and movement return. There is a genuine sense that something is being rebuilt. Yet this rebuilding never produces a simple restoration of the world as it was. That would be impossible.

The symphony's deepest structural idea becomes increasingly clear in its final section, when material associated with the first movement returns in further development. This is not a literal recapitulation. The music of the beginning has passed through catastrophe, shock and reconstruction. It can return, but it cannot return unchanged.

This is a principle which has become increasingly significant in Bullock's later symphonies, but in *Dresden* it acquires a particularly devastating force. In *Symphony No. 37, The Return*, the act of returning was shaped by everything encountered during the journey. In *Fjorden*, the return to open space was transformed by the experience of passing through the fjord. Here, however, the return is darker. The music revisits the emotional world of the first movement after the destruction has actually taken place.

At the beginning of the symphony, the sadness is shadowed by the knowledge that catastrophe belongs to human history and continues to threaten the present. At the end, the catastrophe has been lived through. The final sadness is therefore not simply a repetition of the opening mood. It is deeper because the music now contains the memory of the firestorm and the fragile, incomplete process of reconstruction. The symphony does not deny survival. Nor does it deny the extraordinary human capacity to rebuild what has been destroyed. But it refuses to convert reconstruction into redemption. Here is the difficult recognition that beauty and horror can coexist in the same history.

This may be the symphony's most profound insight. Dresden is beautiful, it was destroyed and then rebuilt. The restored architecture does not erase the firestorm; the firestorm does not erase the beauty which preceded it or the beauty which has subsequently reappeared. All of these realities exist simultaneously. The symphony's musical language reflects this coexistence. Sadness, violence, shock, historical memory and reconstructed beauty do not form a simple progression in which one emotional state replaces another. Instead, each remains present within what follows. The violence of the second movement changes the meaning of the third. The reconstructed historical styles are haunted by what the listener has already heard. The final return to the material of the first movement is shaped by everything that has intervened.

This is why the work's conclusion is so convincing. A triumphant ending would falsify the emotional journey. Even a serene resolution might suggest a degree of reconciliation which the symphony cannot honestly claim. The final section returns instead to sadness—not hopelessness, and not despair without qualification, but sadness in the fullest sense of remembered experience. The city survives and its destroyed beauty is to some extent recreated - but the dead remain dead.

In this respect, *Dresden* becomes considerably more than a symphony about a single historical event. Its real subject is the relationship between memory and the human cycle of creation and destruction. Human beings build cities of extraordinary beauty and complexity. They create art, music and architecture. They then destroy the creations of others—and sometimes their own. Afterwards they mourn, remember and rebuild. The terrible question beneath the symphony is whether memory changes anything.

The work offers no easy answer. Its sense of universal shame suggests that history has not yet taught humanity what it should have learned. Dresden cannot simply be contemplated as an event belonging to 1945 when cities and lives continue to be destroyed elsewhere. The symphony's sadness therefore has a contemporary urgency. Yet the work does not become a political statement in any narrow sense. Its moral power arises precisely because it remains musical and human rather than rhetorical. It does not instruct the listener what to think about Dresden or about war. Instead, it creates a sequence of experiences - grief, violence, dislocation, memory, reconstruction and renewed grief - and allows their cumulative effect to speak for itself.

The use of imperfectly reconstructed historical musical styles is especially important in this context. They embody the impossibility of returning to an unbroken past. One may rebuild a façade, reconstruct a church or revive a musical style, but the act of reconstruction takes place in the present. Memory can preserve forms; it cannot restore innocence. The past can be remembered, but not re-entered.

Ultimately, *Symphony No. 39* is a work about this impossible return. Dresden can rebuild itself, but it cannot become again the Dresden that existed before February 1945. Humanity can remember its catastrophes, but it cannot undo them. The music can return to material from its opening movement, but that material can no longer mean what it meant before the destruction. The symphony understands that every return carries the history of what has happened in between.

Its final sadness is therefore not a failure to resolve the work. It is the resolution. It is the only emotional conclusion which can contain the contradictions the symphony has explored: destruction and survival, horror and beauty, memory and reconstruction, hope and shame. Perhaps that is the most powerful achievement of *Symphony No. 39*. It does not ask us to forget, forgive too easily or imagine that reconstruction can make the past disappear. It asks us instead to recognise that what has been destroyed remains part of what survives, and that memory is not the opposite of life but one of the ways in which life continues to carry its history.

Symphony No. 40 Op. 364

For Unto Us

Programme Note

Written following the news of the composer's second daughter's pregnancy in 2025 and completed after the birth in 2026, *Symphony No. 40*, *For Unto Us*, is a five-movement celebration of the arrival of a new member of the family. The work is dedicated to the baby and his parents, and follows the journey from the first excitement of the news, through pregnancy and waiting, to the eventual announcement of the baby's name.

The **first movement**, *News*, begins in a state of excitement. Trembling chromatic figures rise through the strings, alternating with more lyrical chordal passages, until a timpani announcement introduces a new and more stable musical world. Broad diatonic brass chords prepare two related announcements: a spacious trumpet theme, which will return at the very end of the symphony, and a brief quotation from *New York, New York - "Start spreadin' the news"* - intended for the baby's father. Excitement and lyricism then return to bring the movement to its close.

Mother and Child moves into an entirely different world. Extremely gentle muted strings present an adaptation of music originally written for the mother shortly after her own birth and later incorporated into *Nocturne No. 8*, Op. 39. Against and between this music comes another presence: the actual speed and precise rhythm of the baby's heartbeat, as recorded during one of the scans and heard here on the side drum. The movement therefore brings together mother and unborn child in the most direct possible musical way: the mother's music from the beginning of her life and the baby's physical pulse before his.

The **third movement,** *Building Blocks*, is concerned with energy, growth and the remorselessly rapid expansion of cells. Rising chromatic figures develop at different speeds against the continuing rhythm of the baby's heartbeat. The score identifies this movement as *Building Blocks*, and its musical construction reflects the title: small elements expand, accumulate and combine into increasingly complex structures. At rehearsal A, however, a more lyrical world appears, including a theme in the upper strings which, although its identity was not yet known to the composer, eventually proves to be the baby's name theme. The person for whom the symphony is being written is already present in the music before his name has been announced.

In the **fourth movement,** *Waiting*, the initial excitement gives way to the long period of anticipation. A languorous, slow melody is heard first in the cello and later in the horns, accompanied by a gentle syncopated background. The baby's theme, now recognised as such, becomes increasingly present, while a transformed version of his mother's earlier music returns.

The **final movement,** *Arrival*, brings together the principal ideas of the symphony. Tentative strings are answered by the baby's motif, while references to the heartbeat return, changing in pace as the music becomes increasingly active. Contrapuntal passages develop the accumulated material, and the first four notes of his mother's theme acquire dramatic prominence. The stable announcement music from the first movement returns, followed by further appearances of the mother's own music and an increasingly urgent heartbeat. Eventually the broad trumpet announcement theme, prepared so long before, returns.

Then, at last, the mystery is resolved. At rehearsal M—appropriately, perhaps, for Mother—the baby's name is announced: Jordi. A brief quotation from Handel's *Messiah*, *For Unto Us a Son Is Given*, provides the final act of welcome. The music then subsides quietly, perhaps, as the composer suggests, exhausted.

Discussion

Symphony No. 40, *For Unto Us*, belongs to a remarkable group of works in which Dafydd Bullock has attempted something that music is uniquely capable of doing: composing for a person who is already physically present, increasingly audible and increasingly imaginable, but who has not yet fully entered the world.

The work follows *Symphony No. 27*, *For a New Life*, written before the birth of Bullock's first granddaughter Evelyn, and *Symphony No. 32*, written d before the birth of his second granddaughter Norah. In each of these symphonies, the unborn child is not treated as an abstract symbol of innocence or hope. The music begins instead with evidence. A heartbeat is heard. A scan reveals a rhythm, a movement or a physical form. The composer responds not by inventing the personality of someone he cannot yet know, but by listening for what can actually be heard.

Symphony No. 40 develops this idea further. Its five movements follow a recognisable emotional and physical progression: the announcement of the pregnancy, the intimate relationship of mother and unborn child, the extraordinary processes of growth, the long period of waiting and, finally, arrival. The score itself explicitly divides the work into these five stages: *News*, *Mother and Child*, *Building Blocks*, *Waiting* and *Arrival*.

Yet the most extraordinary aspect of the symphony lies elsewhere. Without knowing it, the composer introduces the baby's name theme into the music before he has a name. That discovery becomes one of the work's deepest structural ideas.

The **first movement**, *News*, is immediately characterised by excitement. The rising chromatic activity in the strings seems almost physically incapable of remaining still. The news has arrived, and the music trembles with it. But this excitement is not simply expressed through speed or volume. The chromatic movement is repeatedly interrupted by more lyrical and stable passages, suggesting the strange emotional mixture that accompanies such news: sudden exhilaration, disbelief, anticipation and moments of reflective tenderness.

The arrival of the timpani announcement is particularly important because it introduces a more stable musical element into the movement. Broad diatonic brass chords prepare the way for the symphony's first explicit act of proclamation. The music will eventually announce Jordi himself, but it is already fascinated by the idea of announcement.

The quotation from *New York, New York* is therefore much more than a joke, although it is certainly a very good one. *"Start spreadin' the news"* becomes a musical message intended for the baby's father and places the new pregnancy within the family's particular world of references, memories and relationships. The unborn child has not yet become an identifiable person, but the family around him is already musically present.

The movement's broad trumpet phrase is even more significant. It sounds like an announcement waiting for its object. The musical form exists before the name that will eventually fill it and this idea becomes increasingly important as the symphony unfolds.

The second movement, *Mother and Child*, turns away from public excitement towards something much more intimate. Here Bullock makes a particularly beautiful connection across generations. The gentle muted string music is adapted from music written for his youngest daughter shortly after her own birth, material which later became *Nocturne No. 8*, Op. 39. She, once the newborn child at

the centre of her father's music, has now become the mother. Her past returns as the musical environment surrounding her unborn son.

Against this remembered music comes the baby's actual heartbeat, reproduced in its precise recorded rhythm on the side drum. The effect is conceptually simple and emotionally powerful. The movement places two forms of time alongside one another. The mother's musical past - the music written for her at the beginning of her life - encounters the baby's present physical existence before his birth.

Mother and child are therefore represented not by an abstract duet, but by two entirely different kinds of musical evidence. One is memory transformed into melody. The other is life measured in pulse. The relationship between them is profoundly moving because neither replaces the other. The mother's music remains gentle, lyrical and humanly remembered, while the baby's heartbeat is factual, physical and immediate. The symphony allows memory and biology to coexist.

The **third movement,** *Building Blocks*, moves into an entirely different emotional territory. Here there is little waiting or contemplation. The music becomes energetic and generative. Rising chromatic figures appear at different speeds and levels, expanding against the continuing background of the baby's heartbeat. The movement is concerned with the almost unimaginable speed and complexity of development: cells dividing, structures forming and a new body emerging from processes too rapid and too intricate to be consciously grasped.

Yet Bullock does not attempt a scientific illustration of pregnancy. He does something more musical and, in some ways, more convincing. The movement itself behaves like a process of construction. Small figures are repeated, enlarged, combined and set against one another. The music seems to build itself. This is where the first great surprise occurs. At rehearsal A, a more lyrical element enters, including a theme in the upper strings. At the time of composition, it was simply part of the developing musical material. Only later, after the baby's birth and the eventual announcement of his name, did the composer recognise that this was the name theme. He was already there.

The composer had gone to Spain still waiting for the final element which would complete the symphony: the name of the child for whom it had been written. Yet the musical identity that would eventually become the baby's was already embedded in the score. This gives the entire symphony an almost uncanny retrospective unity. The newborn does not suddenly enter the music in the final movement. He is gradually recognised within music that has already been written.

Of course, this does not imply any mystical prediction in a literal sense. The name had not yet been known, and the composer could not possibly have identified the significance of the theme at the time. But that is precisely what makes the discovery so beautiful. Composition has its own form of intuition. Material is created before its full significance is understood. Later events illuminate something that was already there.

The **fourth movement,** *Waiting*, gives this idea time to breathe. After the physical energy of *Building Blocks*, the music becomes slower, more languorous and more patient. A broad melody in the cello, later transferred to the horns, seems to accept that there is nothing more to be done. Now one must wait. This is one of the emotional truths of the whole symphony. Pregnancy involves periods of intense activity, discovery and excitement, but it also involves long stretches during which the most important thing is simply time. The new life continues its development according to its own rhythm. Those waiting can watch, listen, imagine and hope, but they cannot hurry the process.

The baby's theme is now omnipresent, although its identity will only become fully explicit at the end. The mother's music also returns in transformed form. The movement therefore becomes a

place where generations overlap: the mother as she once was, the child she is carrying and the family waiting for the next stage of its history.

Then comes *Arrival*.

The **finale** begins tentatively, as though even at this late stage the music understands that the final revelation has not yet been made. The baby's motif appears, heartbeat rhythms return, and the contrapuntal activity becomes increasingly animated. The symphony begins to gather together the elements accumulated across its previous movements.

This process is crucial. The finale does not abandon the earlier material in favour of a new conclusion. It becomes a gathering of everything that has happened. The mother's theme returns repeatedly. The stable announcement music from the first movement reappears. The heartbeat returns in changing forms. The broad trumpet phrase, heard earlier as a promise of an announcement, approaches its moment of fulfilment.

The structure of the symphony therefore resembles the emotional experience of the pregnancy itself. From the beginning, everyone knows that something is coming. Yet the precise identity of the person remains incomplete. There is a heartbeat, movement, development, increasing physical evidence and, eventually, a child who can be named. The musical announcement has been waiting for him. When the name finally appears - *Jordi* **-** the symphony's retrospective logic suddenly becomes clear. The theme that had been present since the third movement receives its identity. The music does not create Jordi at this point. It recognises him.

The placement of this revelation at rehearsal M, for Mother, is an especially charming detail. After all, the baby's musical arrival is inseparable from his mother! Her earlier music has accompanied the symphony from the beginning, and the entire work has repeatedly connected her past as a child with her present as a mother.

The quotation from Handel's *Messiah*, *For Unto Us a Son Is Given*, completes the act of arrival with characteristic warmth. It is not necessary to understand it as a theological statement. Within the context of the symphony, the quotation is a musical announcement of almost ceremonial directness.

A son has been given. Yet the quiet ending is perhaps even more characteristic than the announcement itself. After all the excitement, the chromatic activity, the heartbeat, the contrapuntal complexity and the accumulation of family themes and memories, the music does not end in a blaze of orchestral triumph. It subsides, exhausted. A birth is not the conclusion of a triumphant narrative. It is the beginning of something whose future cannot yet be known. The symphony has brought a baby to the threshold of the world, but it cannot go with him beyond that point.

In this respect, *For Unto Us* shares something fundamental with the earlier grandchild symphonies. Each is written towards a person who is real and physically present but not yet fully known. The composer can hear a heartbeat, observe development and surround the child with family memories, but he cannot compose the life that lies ahead. The mystery remains. What changes in *Symphony No. 40* is the extraordinary rôle of retrospective recognition. The baby's theme exists *before* his name. The symphony contains its own future revelation. Material whose meaning is initially unknown acquires a new identity because of something that happens later. This is perhaps the work's most profound relationship with time.

The mother's past returns through music written for her as a newborn child. The baby's present is heard through his heartbeat. His future identity is anticipated unknowingly through a theme that will eventually bear his name. Meanwhile, the family waits in the present for an arrival that will transform all these relationships once again. Past, present and future are therefore not arranged in a

simple line - they are all sounding at once. The little boy is surrounded, even before his birth, by music from his mother's childhood, by the rhythm of his own developing heart, by an announcement theme waiting for a name and by a melody that already seems to know more than its composer does.

That gives Symphony No. 40 a particularly beautiful place in the sequence of family symphonies. It is not merely a portrait of a new grandchild, because he cannot yet be portrayed. Nor is it simply an account of pregnancy, although pregnancy provides its structure. It is a symphony about recognition: the gradual discovery that someone is coming, the accumulation of evidence that he is there and, finally, the moment when the unknown person receives a name. In this case, he was there all along!

Symphony No. 41 Op. 371

Mare Nostrum

Programme Note

Written six weeks after the composer's return from Nerja in Andalusia, where February 2026 was spent largely on a sunny terrace overlooking the Mediterranean, *Symphony No. 41, Mare Nostrum*—the Roman name for the Mediterranean, meaning "Our Sea"—is a four-movement evocation of a place which, for one memorable month, seemed very much to become exactly that. The symphony is dedicated to two close friends, Antonia and Enrique, with whom so much of that time was shared.

The **first movement,** *Morning Waves*, evokes the steady movement of the sea towards the land. Its music unfolds with patience and continuity, the strings creating the impression not of dramatic waves or violent weather but of the regular, hypnotic swell of the Mediterranean on a calm morning. The movement establishes the sea as a permanent presence: endlessly changing, yet always recognisably itself.

Morning Birds, the **second movement,** provides an immediate contrast. The calm continuity of the waves gives way to the restless, hysterical and seemingly chaotic activity of small birds resting on the roof after crossing from Africa before continuing northwards. Rapid, darting figures pass through the strings with an energy that is at once excited, confused and exuberantly alive. The movement is less concerned with the shape of flight than with its sheer nervous intensity.

In the **third movement,** *Distant Storm*, the atmosphere darkens. The idyll is temporarily overshadowed by dark skies and hints of thunder somewhere beyond the immediate horizon, but the storm never destroys the underlying tranquillity. Instead, the temporary darkness seems almost to intensify the beauty of the surrounding landscape. Towards the end, the movement is touched by a quotation from the Welsh folksong *Ar Lan y Môr*—"By the Seashore"—together with a light suggestion of almost flamenco colour. Wales and Andalusia briefly meet beside the Mediterranean.

The f**inal movement,** *Setting Sun*, brings the symphony towards evening. The activity of the day gradually dissolves as the daily spectacle begins. The restless birds have gone, the distant storm has passed and the movement turns increasingly towards breadth, colour and stillness. The strings finally return to the larger, slower rhythms of the sea, as though the entire day is being absorbed once more into the continuing presence of *Mare Nostrum*.

Symphony No. 41 is a celebration of place, friendship and memory. It does not attempt to describe Nerja literally, but rather to recreate the sensations of living for a time beside the Mediterranean: waking to its movement, watching the restless life around it, seeing the weather change and finally watching the day dissolve into sunset.

Discussion

Symphony No. 41, *Mare Nostrum*, is a work of memory, but it is an unusually immediate kind of memory. It was written only six weeks after Dafydd Bullock returned from a month in Nerja, Andalusia, where February 2026 had been spent on a mostly sunny terrace overlooking the Mediterranean. The experiences which generated the symphony had therefore not yet acquired the distance or selective haze of nostalgia. They remained physically and emotionally present: the regular movement of the sea, the extraordinary activity of migrating birds, the occasional darkening of the sky, the warmth of friendship and the daily transformation of the landscape as evening approached.

The title itself establishes the work's central idea. *Mare Nostrum*—"Our Sea"—was the Roman name for the Mediterranean. It is a phrase of possession, familiarity and belonging, but in the context of this symphony its meaning is personal rather than imperial. For one month, the sea became part of daily life. It was not a destination to be visited or a spectacular landscape to be briefly admired. It was simply there, every morning and every evening, changing constantly but never disappearing.

That quality of continuing presence is fundamental to the symphony.

The work is written for string orchestra, a medium particularly well suited to this kind of sustained observation. There is no need for the vast orchestral palette of *Fjorden*, with its sea, landscape, Northern Lights and Norwegian folk material. *Mare Nostrum* is more concentrated. Its world is created entirely from the changing relationships between the five string parts. The result is an intimacy of sound appropriate to the scale of the experience itself. The Mediterranean may be vast, but the experience from a terrace is personal: one sees only a particular stretch of it, hears only the sounds which reach one's own ears and remembers particular moments rather than the whole geography of the sea.

The **first movement**, *Morning Waves*, establishes this perspective with remarkable economy. The opening is extraordinarily sparse. The score begins slowly, with individual sustained lines entering gradually while much of the ensemble remains silent. The effect is not of a dramatic musical beginning but of an environment which already exists before the listener becomes aware of it. The sea was moving before breakfast, will continue to move before anyone looked at it - and will keep moving afterwards.

The first movement therefore does not impose a dramatic narrative upon the waves. Instead, the musical material establishes continuity. Long string notes, gently changing lines and the gradual redistribution of sound between the instruments suggest the steady swell moving towards the shore. There is motion, but it is motion without urgency. The sea does not need to arrive anywhere.

This distinction is important. Much music inspired by the sea is fascinated by its power, danger or violence. Bullock's Mediterranean is something else. It is a companion. Its movement is observed repeatedly and becomes increasingly familiar. The listener begins to recognise the paradox of the waves: they are always changing, but the experience of watching them is one of continuity.

The movement's spaciousness therefore creates not emptiness but security. The sea is large enough to absorb individual events. A small change of harmony or register can alter the colour of the landscape without disturbing its essential character. The music behaves almost like the horizon itself: always visible, constantly altered by light and weather, yet fundamentally stable.

Then comes the **second movement**, *Morning Birds*, and stability is replaced by glorious confusion. The contrast is immediate. The score opens at a considerably faster tempo, with rapid, darting figures appearing first in the upper strings and then spreading through the ensemble. The calm, extended gestures of *Morning Waves* have disappeared. In their place is a musical world of nervous energy, sharp attacks and restless motion. This movement seems to capture precisely what the composer's description suggests: not an idealised vision of graceful birds in elegant flight, but the slightly mad activity of small creatures apparently incapable of agreeing upon where they are going next.

There is something wonderfully specific about this. These are not symbolic birds representing freedom, transcendence or the soul. They are migrants who have crossed from Africa, rested on the roof and are preparing to continue northwards. They are tired, restless, noisy and energetic. The music is equally restless. Rapid repeated figures, abrupt changes of direction and the gradual involvement of the different string voices create the impression of activity spreading unpredictably through the ensemble. The movement has no need to organise this behaviour into a polite classical scherzo. Its energy comes precisely from the sense that things are happening simultaneously.

The result is almost comic, but it is also an extraordinarily vivid expression of life. After the continuity of the sea, the birds represent movement in its most individual and unpredictable form. The waves move collectively; the birds appear to move according to five hundred separate decisions.

The juxtaposition of the first two movements is therefore central to the symphony's conception. The sea and the birds belong to the same morning, but they embody entirely different forms of energy. One is continuous and elemental. The other is immediate, nervous and alive.

The **third movement,** *Distant Storm*, introduces a darker colour. Its opening tempo is slower, and the music begins with an uneasy combination of melodic fragments and sustained tones. The atmosphere changes without becoming catastrophic. This is not a storm symphony. The storm remains distant and that distance is musically important.

There are hints of disturbance, darkening colours and suggestions of a greater force somewhere beyond the immediate landscape, but the idyll itself survives. Indeed, as the composer suggests, the temporary darkness may actually intensify the beauty of what surrounds it. The Mediterranean is seen differently under dark clouds. The light changes, the colours become more intense and the familiar landscape acquires a new dramatic dimension. This movement therefore occupies an intriguing emotional space between disturbance and security. Something threatening exists, but it does not arrive. The listener is permitted to experience the pleasure of watching the weather change without being consumed by it.

It is within this context that the quotation from *Ar Lan y Môr* becomes particularly touching. The Welsh folksong, with its title meaning “By the Seashore”, introduces another sea into the Mediterranean landscape. It is not simply a quotation inserted because the composer happens to be Welsh. Rather, it allows different geographical memories to coexist. The Mediterranean becomes *our sea*, but another shore is never entirely absent. This is one of the most characteristic aspects of Bullock's mature musical imagination. Places do not simply replace one another. Wales can appear in India. Austria can appear beside family memory. A Norwegian fjord can contain both an actual folk melody and a newly invented one. Here, beside the Mediterranean, a Welsh song appears almost naturally.

The light touch of *almost flamenco* that accompanies this moment is equally revealing. Andalusia enters the music, but not through an attempt at authentic reproduction. The phrase “almost flamenco” is important because it suggests an atmosphere rather than a quotation. The music does

not pretend to become Spanish. It allows a Spanish inflection to pass through its own musical language. For a brief moment Wales and Andalusia meet beside the Mediterranean. The movement therefore becomes a particularly rich meditation upon belonging. Bullock is Welsh, living in Germany, remembering a month in southern Spain, sharing it with Spanish friends and looking out over a sea whose history connects Africa, Europe and the Near East. The quotation of *Ar Lan y Môr* is not an intrusion into this landscape. It is evidence that every experience of place is also an experience of the places one has brought with oneself.

The **fourth movement**, called *Setting Sun* in the score, completes the symphony by allowing the accumulated activity of the day to dissolve. At first, the movement retains considerable life. The opening is animated, with all five string parts participating in rhythmic and melodic activity. But this energy is increasingly absorbed into broader gestures. The sunset does not arrive as a sudden event, it takes possession of the landscape gradually.

This process is beautifully suited to the string orchestra. Lines which had previously been independent begin to merge into larger sonorities. Rhythmic activity becomes less insistent. Individual gestures acquire greater length and weight. By the later stages of the movement, the music has become increasingly spacious, with sustained sonorities and broad melodic contours dominating the texture.

The effect is not simply one of slowing down. It is a transformation of attention. During the morning, attention was directed towards the movement of the sea. Then it was captured by the birds. The weather briefly altered the entire atmosphere. Now, as the sun begins to set, the individual events of the day become less important than the larger spectacle surrounding them.The world grows quieter because the listener is looking outward. The final pages are particularly significant. The music becomes progressively more spacious and the individual parts are allowed to sustain long notes across wide stretches of time. The activity has not simply stopped; it has dissolved into another state. This brings the symphony back, in a transformed way, towards the world of the first movement. The sea remains.

That is, I think, the deeper architecture of *Mare Nostrum*. The symphony begins with the sea as a permanent presence, moves through the restless temporary events which occur around it—the birds, the weather, the changing colours of the landscape—and finally returns to a state in which those events have subsided. The individual day has passed, the sea has not.

This does not mean that the symphony is simply cyclical. The final stillness is not identical with the opening. Between the two lies an entire day of experience. The restless birds have crossed another stage of their journey. The distant storm has darkened and then released the landscape. Wales has briefly appeared beside Andalusia. Friendship, conversation and shared experience belong invisibly to everything that has happened. The final sea therefore contains the memory of the day.

The last movement gradually releases the symphony from its accumulated activity, but the ending is not empty. The final pages retain an extraordinary sense of breadth, as the strings settle into increasingly extended gestures before the music finally comes to rest. The work ends with the quiet assurance of something continuing beyond the point at which the composition stops. The composer does not arrive at a gigantic retrospective statement, a summation of everything that has preceded it or an attempt to create a final monument.

There are no questions of historical catastrophe, as in *Dresden*. There is no unborn child waiting to receive a name, as in *For Unto Us*. There is no philosophical temple, golden city or Arctic fjord. There is simply the sea, and yet, of course, nothing is ever simply the sea.

Within this apparently modest four-movement symphony are migration, memory, geography, friendship, Wales, Spain, weather, movement, stillness and the peculiar experience of inhabiting a place long enough for it to become part of one's life. Perhaps that is why *Mare Nostrum* feels such an appropriate temporary conclusion. The title says “Our Sea”, and the possessive is important. Not *the* Mediterranean, viewed as an object, a landscape or a tourist destination. For one month, it became something shared: between the composer, his wife and their friends, between the people on the terrace and the birds resting briefly before continuing their enormous journey.

Symphony No. 41 therefore does not attempt to possess the Mediterranean. It remembers the period in which the Mediterranean became part of a particular life. The waves continued to arrive every morning. The birds rested and departed. Storms remained somewhere on the horizon. The sun went down, and the next day began. The symphony captures four moments from that continuing cycle.

Symphony No. 42 Op. 377

Castell y Gwynt - Castle of the Wind

Programme Note

Castell y Gwynt (Castle of the Wind), Symphony No. 42, takes its inspiration from one of the most extraordinary rock formations in the mountains of Gwynedd in North Wales. Here, enormous jagged slabs of rock thrust upwards from the mountainside, their sharply fractured edges and improbable vertical forms creating the impression of a structure shattered and reconstructed by some immense geological force. Known as the Castle of the Wind, this remarkable landscape possesses an almost architectural character, although its apparent solidity is continually exposed to the movement of wind, mist, cloud and light. The nearby Eryri massif provides a majestic natural backdrop, establishing a setting in which the permanence of the mountains and the ever-changing atmosphere become inseparable.

The three movements of the symphony explore different aspects of this landscape. The **opening movement** evokes the gradual emergence of the great rock formations through freezing mountain mist. At first, their shapes are scarcely distinguishable, appearing as fragments of shadow and indistinct silhouettes against the surrounding darkness. Slowly, the extraordinary vertical forms become visible, their outlines emerging from the obscurity with an almost monumental stillness. The restrained orchestral writing, with its muted strings and absence of vibrato, creates an atmosphere of coldness and mystery. The music unfolds patiently, allowing the landscape to reveal itself through subtle changes of colour and texture rather than through any immediate dramatic gesture.

The **second movement** presents a dramatic contrast, evoking the elemental forces of a storm sweeping across the mountains. The music becomes increasingly turbulent and energetic, with rapidly moving string figures, powerful percussion and the growing prominence of the brass contributing to an impression of considerable natural violence. The apparently immovable rock formations are now surrounded by forces that seem capable of overwhelming everything in their path. The movement provides the symphony with its principal episode of orchestral intensity, its restless musical activity suggesting the extraordinary power of the mountain environment.

The **final movement** turns towards the serenity of sunrise and sunset, when the changing light transforms the appearance of the rocks and the distant mountain landscape. The harp establishes a gently flowing atmosphere, while individual woodwind instruments emerge in a succession of solo contributions. The orchestral texture gradually expands, passing through contrasting episodes of lyrical reflection and greater intensity before returning to a more spacious and contemplative character. An important feature of this movement is the reappearance of a three-note musical idea from Symphony No. 1, *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon*. In that earlier work, the theme represented the majesty of the Eryri massif. Its return here establishes a direct musical connection between the two symphonies, recalling the magnificent mountain presence that forms the backdrop to the Castle of the Wind. The landscape is thus given a musical identity extending beyond the boundaries of the present composition, linking the work with the beginning of the composer's symphonic journey.

The three movements consequently offer contrasting impressions of the same remarkable place: the mysterious emergence of the rock formations through freezing mist, the violence of a mountain storm, and the serenity of the changing light at sunrise and sunset. Beneath these contrasting experiences lies a continuing awareness of the immense natural forces that have shaped the

landscape and continue to surround it. *Castell y Gwynt* is both a celebration of the extraordinary physical character of the mountains of Gwynedd and a reflection upon their enduring majesty.

Discussion

Symphony No. 42, Castell y Gwynt, is a particularly evocative example of Dafydd Bullock's continuing engagement with the relationship between landscape and musical form. Its inspiration is a specific and highly distinctive geographical location in Gwynedd, North Wales, where enormous fractured slabs of rock rise vertically from the mountain terrain. Their extraordinary shapes, resembling the remains of some ancient fortress, provide the imaginative starting point for a composition that explores the relationship between geological permanence and the constantly changing forces of the natural world. The title, Castle of the Wind, captures this opposition with particular economy. The rocks appear monumental and immovable, yet the surrounding atmosphere is in continual motion, transforming their appearance through mist, cloud, storm and light.

The symphony is constructed in three movements, each offering a different perspective upon this landscape. Rather than following a literal descriptive programme, the composer uses the contrasting possibilities of orchestral texture, rhythm and instrumental colour to evoke the changing conditions of the mountain environment. The result is a work in which the visual inspiration is translated into musical terms without sacrificing the autonomy of the symphonic argument.

The **opening movement** establishes an atmosphere of extraordinary restraint. Its slow tempo immediately creates a sense of spaciousness, while the initial use of muted strings, marked *non vibrato*, gives the orchestral sound an unusual degree of austerity. The absence of the warmer, more expressive qualities normally associated with string writing is significant. The music seems to exist in a world of extreme cold, where sound itself is restrained by the surrounding atmosphere. The gradual unfolding of the opening material suggests the slow emergence of the rock formations through freezing mist, their shapes initially indistinct and only gradually acquiring definition.

The orchestration is central to this conception. By withholding the immediate participation of the wind and brass instruments, the composer allows the strings to establish an almost monochromatic sound world. Their sustained notes and slowly changing harmonic relationships create a sense of suspended time, while the absence of *vibrato* reinforces the impression of an environment in which ordinary human warmth has been displaced by the severity of the mountain landscape. The music does not attempt to imitate the movement of mist or the physical appearance of the rocks. Instead, it evokes the experience of standing before a landscape whose defining features are only gradually becoming visible.

As the movement progresses, the gradual redistribution of musical activity between the string instruments introduces a greater sense of definition. Individual lines emerge from the surrounding texture, creating the impression of forms becoming increasingly distinct. The harmonic language, with its chromatic inflections and changing relationships between sustained notes, contributes to an atmosphere of uncertainty. The music seems continually to approach a state of greater clarity without ever entirely abandoning its initial ambiguity. This is particularly appropriate to the visual inspiration, where the extraordinary vertical slabs may appear and disappear according to the movement of cloud and mist.

The movement's development is therefore achieved primarily through changes of texture and orchestral colour rather than through conventional thematic opposition. This gives the music a distinctive architectural quality. The individual instrumental parts seem to establish the dimensions of a structure gradually emerging from obscurity, while the overall harmonic environment remains fluid and unsettled. The result is a convincing musical representation of the Castle of the Wind as it might appear in the first light of day, or as a series of immense silhouettes against a darkening sky.

The **second movement** introduces a decisive change of character. The music assumes a much more urgent rhythmic identity, and the opening contribution of the timpani immediately establishes a dramatic contrast with the preceding movement. The melodic shapes of the first movement are here transformed into rapid string figures which create an impression of restless movement, while the subsequent participation of the brass and percussion introduces increasing weight and intensity. The musical landscape has been transformed. The apparent stillness of the rocks is now surrounded by the turbulent forces of a mountain storm.

The string writing is particularly important in establishing the movement's character. Its rapidly moving figures create a continuous source of energy, with the different sections of the string orchestra contributing to an increasingly animated texture. The chromatic movement of the lines prevents the music from becoming merely repetitive, while the relationship between the mobile string writing and the more sustained orchestral sonorities creates a sense of tension. The music seems continually to be driven forward by forces that are not entirely predictable.

The brass and percussion provide a further dimension to this musical argument. Their contributions introduce moments of considerable orchestral force, suggesting the impact of the storm upon the surrounding landscape. The timpani, in particular, establishes an elemental presence, while the brass gradually assumes a more prominent role in the accumulation of orchestral weight. The resulting contrast with the first movement is particularly effective. Where the opening movement was concerned with the slow revelation of physical forms, the second explores the energy and violence of the natural forces surrounding them.

There is, nevertheless, an important structural distinction between turbulence and disorder. The movement's rhythmic activity remains carefully organised, and its repeated patterns provide a degree of continuity beneath the changing orchestral surface. The composer creates an impression of natural instability through the interaction of clearly defined musical elements. This gives the movement a convincing sense of momentum without allowing its dramatic character to overwhelm the underlying musical construction. It is the symphony's principal episode of elemental violence, and its position between the two more reflective movements gives the overall structure a clear dramatic purpose.

The **third movement** offers a return to a more spacious musical environment. It introduces the harp as the principal source of movement, its recurring arpeggiated figures establishing an atmosphere of delicacy and serenity. The contrast with the second movement is immediate, but the change is not simply one of reduced volume or tempo. The entire orchestral perspective is transformed. The music now suggests the changing light of sunrise or sunset, when the sharply defined edges of the rocks acquire warmth and colour, and the distant mountain landscape becomes visible beneath a vast and continually changing sky.

The harp's opening figures are particularly effective in establishing this character. Their flowing movement provides a continuous musical background, while the woodwind instruments gradually emerge as individual voices. The solo contributions of the flute, oboe, clarinet and bassoon create a succession of contrasting colours, each adding a different perspective to the developing musical landscape. The orchestration is notable for its restraint. The instruments are allowed to retain their individual identities rather than being absorbed into a continuously blended orchestral texture. This gives the opening of the movement an almost pastoral intimacy, although the underlying musical language remains distinctly symphonic.

As the movement develops, the strings become increasingly active, and the music gradually acquires a more pronounced sense of direction. The harp continues to provide an element of continuity, while the solo woodwind contributions are complemented by the gradual emergence of

other instrumental groups. The changing tempos, including the metronomic indications of 100 and 110, mark successive stages in the development of the musical argument. The orchestration becomes progressively more substantial, and the brass introduces moments of greater weight, creating a contrast between the serenity of the opening and the broader perspective of the developing movement.

An especially significant feature of this movement is the reappearance of the three-note theme from Symphony No. 1, *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon*. In the earlier work, this musical idea represented the majesty of the Snowdon massif, and its return in *Castell y Gwynt* establishes a direct relationship between the two compositions. This is more than a retrospective quotation. It provides the present symphony with a geographical and musical point of reference, recalling the immense mountain presence behind the rock formations themselves. The Castle of the Wind does not exist in isolation. It belongs to a much larger landscape, dominated by the Snowdon massif, and the return of the three-note theme gives that landscape a recognisable musical identity.

The quotation is particularly effective because it introduces an element of continuity extending beyond the immediate boundaries of Symphony No. 42. The composer's symphonic journey, beginning with the Snowdon Symphony, is recalled within a much later work, and the earlier musical idea acquires a new significance through its changed context. What originally represented the majesty of Snowdon now becomes part of a more detailed exploration of the surrounding mountain environment. The relationship between the two works is therefore both geographical and autobiographical, linking the composer's earliest symphonic conception with his continuing development of the genre.

The later stages of the third movement explore a further expansion of orchestral colour and intensity. The brass assumes a more prominent role, and the changing instrumental combinations create a succession of contrasting musical perspectives. The music moves between lyrical passages and more substantial orchestral statements, before eventually returning to the slower tempo of the opening. This return is structurally important, for it allows the movement to recover the spaciousness and tranquillity established by the harp at the beginning. The earlier energy has not been simply abandoned, but absorbed into a more reflective musical perspective.

The closing pages are particularly effective. As the orchestral texture gradually becomes more transparent, individual instrumental voices emerge from the surrounding stillness. The reduction of activity creates a sense of distance, as though the landscape were once again being viewed from a position of quiet contemplation. The conclusion avoids the conventional grand orchestral affirmation that might have been expected after the more substantial passages of the movement. Instead, the music withdraws into an atmosphere of openness and serenity. The final impression is one of a landscape continuing beyond the limits of the composition itself.

Considered as a whole, *Castell y Gwynt* is a symphony whose three movements are united by a clearly defined imaginative conception. The first movement explores the mysterious emergence of the rock formations through freezing mist; the second evokes the elemental violence of a storm; and the third presents the serenity of sunrise and sunset, with the majestic presence of Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon recalled through the musical quotation from the First Symphony. These are not simply three descriptive episodes, but different aspects of a single landscape, each revealing a different relationship between the physical world and the changing conditions of the atmosphere.

The orchestration plays a particularly important role in establishing this coherence. The composer makes extensive use of contrasting instrumental combinations, allowing the identity of individual orchestral families to emerge at different stages of the work. The restrained string writing of the opening movement, the energetic interplay of strings, brass and percussion in the second, and the

more delicate contributions of the harp and woodwind in the third create a succession of distinctive sound worlds. The orchestra is treated not merely as a means of generating volume and dramatic effect, but as a collection of individual colours capable of suggesting different dimensions of the landscape.

There is also a satisfying relationship between the symphony's overall structure and its underlying subject. The Castle of the Wind suggests an opposition between permanence and change, between the extraordinary solidity of the rocks and the movement of the elements surrounding them. The three movements explore this opposition from different perspectives, beginning with the revelation of the physical forms, passing through the violence of the storm, and concluding with the contemplative beauty of the changing light. The return of the Snowdon theme adds a further dimension, reminding the listener that the individual rock formations belong to a much greater natural environment.

In this respect, the symphony possesses a significance extending beyond the immediate subject of its title. It is a musical celebration of the mountains of Gwynedd, but also a reflection upon the enduring power of landscape to inspire successive generations of artistic expression. The connection with Symphony 1 *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon* is especially important in this regard, for it establishes a continuity between the composer's earliest symphonic work and the present composition. The three-note quotation becomes a musical recollection of a place that has remained central to the composer's imaginative world.

Castell y Gwynt is ultimately a work of considerable atmospheric distinction. Its strength lies in the manner in which specific visual impressions are translated into a coherent musical language, with the changing orchestral textures reflecting the gradual transformation of the landscape. The final movement, with its harp writing, individual instrumental voices and recollection of the Snowdon theme, provides a particularly satisfying conclusion to the symphonic argument. The music does not attempt to impose a definitive ending upon the landscape. The rocks remain, the mountains endure, and the wind continues to move around them. It is this relationship between the permanence of the natural world and the ceaseless movement of the elements that gives the symphony its enduring imaginative character.

After the Forty-Second

There comes a point in a sufficiently long creative journey at which it becomes possible, perhaps for the first time, to look backwards without immediately being concerned with the next step. The arrival of a forty-second symphony does not imply completion, and certainly does not suggest that the composer has reached some final destination beyond which there is nowhere left to go. It is simply a convenient and rather remarkable place at which to pause. Forty-two works now lie behind us. They were written at different times, under different circumstances and in response to very different experiences, but they can now be viewed together. From this vantage point, patterns begin to emerge which could scarcely have been apparent when the individual works were composed.

What becomes visible is not a single line of development, nor a gradual march towards an ultimate symphonic statement. The history of these works is considerably less tidy, and considerably more interesting. Directions change. Earlier concerns return unexpectedly. New experiences alter the meaning of old instincts. A work written many years after another may reveal an affinity which neither title nor chronology would immediately suggest. The forty-two symphonies are therefore best understood not as stages in a predetermined ascent, but as an accumulating body of experience in which different periods of a creative life continue to speak to one another.

Perhaps the most striking discovery is the persistence of the symphonic impulse itself. To return to the same genre forty-two times requires more than habit. The symphony has clearly become the principal space in which experience can be tested, enlarged and transformed. Over the years it has proved capable of accommodating an extraordinary range of subjects and circumstances. Landscape and history, travel and memory, public anxiety and private happiness, encounters with other cultures and the arrival of new members of the family have all found their way into this same musical territory.

Yet the word *symphony* has gradually come to mean something different from the inherited model with which the journey began. Looking back across the sequence, the most significant development is not the discovery of a new formula, but the gradual disappearance of any need for one. The question increasingly becomes not what a symphony ought to be, but what this particular experience requires in musical terms. A symphony may therefore be expansive or compressed, written for a large orchestra or for a restricted ensemble, divided into several movements or conceived as a single continuous span. The form is no longer an external structure into which the music must fit. It grows from the nature of the musical thought itself.

This freedom is one of the clearest signs of artistic development across the collection. It has been acquired rather than declared. The earlier works naturally engage with the great symphonic tradition from which they emerged, and that inheritance remains part of the musical consciousness throughout. But it becomes progressively less prescriptive. The past is not rejected; it is absorbed. What remains from it is not a set of rules but a sense of possibility: the belief that a symphony can contain contrasting worlds, sustain a substantial argument and move freely between intimacy and grandeur.

Looking backwards, the development might therefore be described less as a change of style than as a growth in independence. The later symphonies do not sound as though they have arrived at a final personal language beyond which further development would be impossible. Their confidence lies elsewhere. They are increasingly free to be different from one another. One of the consequences of forty-two symphonies is the discovery that consistency need not mean repetition. A recognisable musical personality can survive while the circumstances of each work continue to change.

Certain instincts nevertheless remain remarkably constant. Lyricism is perhaps the most persistent. Across works of very different scale and inspiration there remains a powerful impulse towards melodic expression. The melody may be expansive or hesitant, direct or fragmented, consoling or vulnerable, but the instinct towards song persists. Looking back over such a large body of work, it becomes clear that lyricism is not simply one feature among others. It is one of the principal means through which experience acquires emotional identity in the music.

The changing role of landscape is another pattern that only becomes fully visible in retrospect. Individual symphonies may be associated with mountains, lakes, forests, cities, rivers or seas, but the geographical variety is less significant than the underlying way in which place enters the musical imagination. Landscape is rarely treated as something merely observed. The more interesting question is what it means to inhabit a place, to travel through it, to remember it or to discover that it has gradually become part of one's own life.

Over time, the idea of landscape expands beyond geography. Places contain history. They contain other lives and earlier experiences. They can be encountered briefly yet remain permanently present in memory, or they can become familiar through repetition and everyday existence. A particular place may suggest scale, stillness, movement, continuity or change. In this sense, landscape becomes one of the ways in which the symphonies think about time itself.

Travel has played a corresponding role. Looking back across the forty-two works, one sees that journeys have repeatedly enlarged the imaginative territory of the music. But these are not travel impressions translated directly into orchestral colour. The important process is transformation. Experience enters the imagination and emerges as something different. The external journey becomes an internal one, and the place which inspired a symphony is absorbed into a musical world which could not have existed before the encounter.

The widening geographical horizon is matched by another, more intimate expansion. As the sequence progresses, personal experience enters the symphonic world with increasing freedom. Family, friendship and memory become legitimate sources of symphonic thought, not because the form has become smaller or less ambitious, but because the distinction between the public and the private has gradually ceased to matter. A deeply personal experience may carry implications as large as any landscape or historical event.

The appearance of children and grandchildren is especially revealing in this respect. Such events alter the composer's relationship with time. The creative imagination is no longer concerned only with memory and inheritance, with the past which has formed the individual, but increasingly with continuity and the future. The presence of a new generation introduces another horizon beyond the composer's own life. Looking back over the whole sequence, this movement towards the personal is not a retreat from the wider world. It is an enlargement of what the wider world can mean.

History, too, enters the symphonies not as an abstract subject but as something capable of being experienced through place, memory and human lives. Landscapes are seldom empty. Beneath their visible surfaces lie migrations, conflicts, cultures and stories of endurance. The music does not generally seek to narrate these events in documentary fashion. Instead, historical consciousness becomes part of the emotional depth from which the symphony grows. The past is not reconstructed; it is encountered through its continuing presence in the present.

The later works add another dimension to this openness. They emerge from a period in which the pressures of the contemporary world have become increasingly difficult to ignore. Health, climate and war all contribute to the atmosphere in which the music is being written. Yet even here the symphonies do not become political statements or musical journalism. The events of the world enter indirectly, altering the emotional climate and sharpening the sense of uncertainty, fragility or

darkness. The symphony remains a place where contradictory experiences can coexist without being reduced to a single explanation.

This capacity for coexistence may be one of the deepest characteristics of the whole collection. Again and again, the music holds opposites in tension: intimacy and grandeur, darkness and lyricism, memory and immediacy, movement and stillness, the familiar and the newly discovered. There is no attempt to eliminate these contradictions. They are part of the world from which the music arises.

Seen from the perspective of forty-two symphonies, another pattern becomes apparent: the importance of transformation. The works are rarely interested in presenting an experience as something fixed. Music exists in time, and the listener's relationship with what is heard changes as the music proceeds. A landscape encountered at the beginning of a symphony may not mean the same thing by its end. A melody may return altered by everything that has happened in the meantime. A memory may become more vivid through transformation rather than repetition.

This may also explain why the symphonies themselves resist a simple narrative of progress. The composer has not travelled from one point to another and left the earlier self behind. Earlier experiences remain active, but they are heard differently after subsequent journeys have taken place. The first mountain is still part of the landscape after the sea has been reached. The early encounter with the symphonic tradition remains present even after the form has acquired far greater freedom. The musical personality develops through accumulation.

Viewed collectively, the forty-two symphonies begin to resemble a kind of autobiography, though one without narrative and without chronology. The events of a life are not recounted. Instead, they are transformed into sound. A journey becomes musical structure. A landscape becomes an environment in which music moves. History becomes emotional tension. A family event becomes a new perspective upon time. A period of uncertainty darkens the horizon. A melody preserves something which words would be incapable of defining.

This is perhaps what the entire collection reveals most clearly. The symphonies are not simply a record of works composed over a number of years. Taken together, they form a record of encounters. The composer encounters landscapes, cultures, history, other people, new generations and the changing conditions of the world around him. Each encounter has the potential to alter the music which follows.

And because life does not arrange its experiences according to a symmetrical design, neither do these forty-two symphonies form a perfectly ordered progression. They are richer for their deviations. An unexpected journey may open a new region of the imagination. A family event may produce a symphony which could never have been planned in advance. A period of darkness may be followed by a rediscovery of lyricism. The sequence has the irregularity of lived experience, and its coherence lies not in a predetermined design but in the accumulation of experiences and the musical transformations they inspire.

Symphony No. 41, *Mare Nostrum*, occupies an important position within this journey. Its Mediterranean horizon suggests continuity, movement and distances beyond immediate sight. Yet it does not mark a final arrival. Instead, it becomes a point of transition, after which the journey takes an unexpected direction. With Symphony No. 42, *Castell y Gwynt – Castle of the Wind*, the geographical imagination returns to Wales, bringing the sequence back towards its origins while revealing how profoundly the musical language has developed in the intervening years.

The significance of *Castell y Gwynt* lies not simply in this return, but in the new relationship it establishes between physical landscape and musical construction. The character of the terrain enters

the music not merely as atmosphere or broad orchestral gesture, but through the intervals themselves. The upward-striding passages entrusted particularly to the solo instruments in the second movement evoke the jagged slabs of rock, translating their irregular shapes and vertical movement into musical language. Landscape has moved another step closer to becoming the actual grammar of the composition. The physical world is no longer simply something contemplated or remembered; its essential characteristics become part of the material from which the music is made.

There is also a striking connection with the beginning of the entire sequence. The return of the three-note motif associated with Symphony No. 1, *Yr Wyddfa - Snowdon*, establishes a musical link between the first and forty-second symphonies. It is not simply a recollection of an earlier idea, but a reminder that the creative journey remains connected to its origins even as its musical language continues to develop. In this sense, *Castell y Gwynt* brings the sequence back to Wales while demonstrating how far the symphonic imagination has travelled. The journey has not been circular, for the composer returns with a different understanding of the landscape and with new means of expressing it. The past remains active, but it does not prevent the discovery of something genuinely new.

The number forty-two is substantial enough to encourage a moment of reflection. From here, the distance travelled is considerable. The early works can be seen in relation to later ones; connections become visible between symphonies separated by years; what once appeared to be isolated experiences can be understood as parts of a larger creative life. The retrospective view offered here is not intended to transform these forty-two symphonies into a finished monument. Its value lies precisely in allowing us to recognise the journey without pretending that the journey is over. We can see recurring paths and unexpected diversions, the persistence of certain musical instincts and the gradual expansion of the territory in which those instincts operate.

The forty-two symphonies have provided no final answer to the question of what a symphony can be. Their achievement is rather to demonstrate that the question remains open. As long as new landscapes can be encountered, new memories formed, new people loved, new histories discovered and new anxieties confronted, there will remain experiences capable of demanding musical expression. *Castell y Gwynt* offers particularly persuasive evidence of this continuing possibility: a work which reaches back to the first symphony while extending the musical language into territory not previously explored in quite this way.

Forty-two symphonies have now accumulated, but the essential journey remains unfinished. The road behind has become visible in all its variety, with its mountains, cities, rivers, seas, histories and personal encounters. The road ahead, fortunately, has not disappeared. We pause here not at the end of the journey, nor at the summit of some predetermined ascent, but at another point from which it is possible to look back with gratitude and forward with curiosity. The symphonic imagination remains open, and there is no reason to suppose that it has yet exhausted what life may ask it to express.

Dafydd Bullock

Dafydd Bullock was born in 1953 in Llanberis, Gwynedd, Cymru (Wales). A composer, conductor, arranger and teacher, he graduated in Music (University of Manchester and the Royal Northern College of Music, 1971 - 1976) where he studied with George Hadjinikos, and took a Master's Degree in International Relations (University of Sussex, 1981 - 1983). In 1993 and 1994 he won first prizes at the National Eisteddfod of Wales, and in 1995 he was honoured in Wales by admission to the highest Order of the Gorsedd of Bards. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2005.

His compositions include 42 Symphonies, 19 Symphonic Poems, 2 Operas, 2 Requiems, 2 Mass settings, a Missa Brevis, an Oratorio, 44 String Quartets, 9 Trios and other chamber music and many songs and pieces for piano. He has written scores for 2 films.

Works have been published in the British Isles by Cwmni Gwynn, Curiad and Bardic Edition, in Belgium by Alain Van Kerckhoven Editeur, in the USA and in Luxembourg by Luxembourg Music Publishers, Music Enterprise and Double You. He has made 42 CDs to date, with SAIN (Wales), AVK (Belgium) and LakeSound. His music has been performed and broadcast in many countries, including Japan, China, Brazil and Colombia as well as widely within Europe.

Dafydd Bullock has a particular relationship with Prague: his Second Symphony was given its world premiere by Musici de Praga during the 1996 Prague Spring Festival and the Third Symphony, again in Prague, on St. Valentine's Day, 1997. The third and fourth String Quartets were also recorded in Prague (Becher Quartet) as were the complete works for Cello and Piano (Jindrich Ptacek) and five Trios. Virtuosi di Basso, the twelve solo celli of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra have recorded and performed music especially written for them. In 2008 and 2009 he premiered his Requiem for Jan Palach in Luxembourg and in Prague.

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