

# Symphony No. 1 Program Information

## Instrumentation

- 2 Flutes (2<sup>nd</sup> Flute doubles on Piccolo)
- 2 Oboes (2<sup>nd</sup> Oboe doubles on English Horn in F)
- 2 Clarinets in B<sup>♭</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Clarinet doubles on Bass Clarinet in B<sup>♭</sup>)
- 2 Bassoons (2<sup>nd</sup> Bassoon doubles on Contrabass Bassoon)
- 4 Horns in F
- 2 Trumpets in B<sup>♭</sup>
- 2 Trombones
- 1 Bass Trombone
- 1 Tuba
- 1 Timpani
- 2 Percussion (Tubular chimes, suspended cymbal, crash cymbals, tam-tam, bass drum)
- 1 Harp
- Strings

## Performance Notes

Performance time: 20:15. Movements: 1) 5:40; 2) 4:50; 3) 5:30; 4) 4:15.

## Program Listing

Symphony No. 1 (2008)

John M. Tarrh (b. 1947)

- I. Sonata Allegro
- II. Adagietto
- III. Scherzo
- IV. Finale. Allegro

## Program Notes

The New Philharmonia Orchestra (<http://www.newphil.org/>) of Newton, MA commissioned this work for performance in April 2008 during its thirteenth season. My *Symphony No. 1* is dedicated to Ronald Knudsen and Adrienne Hartzell, the New Philharmonia's Music Director and Executive Director, respectively, for their extraordinary commitment to bringing music to the community and for creating a path that could bring me fully back to music after far too long an absence.

This four-movement symphony is of classical proportions in terms of its overall form and duration. The first movement introduces the thematic material of the entire work, transformed in such a way that the thematic connections between movements may not be discerned on first hearing. These thematic connections are ultimately made clear in the fourth movement.

Similar to Gustav Mahler's early symphonies, the *Adagietto* second movement is an orchestral arrangement of one of my songs for tenor and piano: *With rue my heart is laden*, setting a poem by A. E. Housman. Like the first song of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*, this poem juxtaposes great joy and great sorrow. Three variations of the song are given. The first, with strings and harp, is most like the original setting with its emphasis on the poet's sorrow at the loss of many golden friends to death. A brief brass chorale setting effectively provides a catharsis, leading to the final version that is wistful but nevertheless more focused on the joy of having had these friends in the first place.

The *Scherzo* movement was inspired by the *Scherzo* of the First Symphony of Jean Sibelius, with timpani stating the first theme and playing an important role throughout. The structures are also similar, as both have an opening section followed by a canon or fugue-like section based on the opening thematic material, then a trio, a recapitulation, and a coda. In my *Scherzo* the recapitulation uses a reinterpretation of the original meter so that when the music returns it is easily recognizable but has been significantly transformed.

The *Finale* is the shortest of the four movements. It serves the important role of illuminating the thematic connections among the first three movements. The opening section connects the second theme of the first movement with the trio of the *Scherzo*. The second section connects the first theme of the first movement with the *Adagietto* and with the first theme of the *Scherzo*. The *Finale* is then rounded out with a return of the trio melody, transformed through a reinterpretation of its original meter. The symphony closes with a final anguished cry from the *Adagietto*.

John M. Tarrh