

Rare Gems: Robert Hughes on the Road to a Symphony

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Australian composer Robert Hughes (1912–2007) is widely known for his orchestral works, film and television music, as well as an opera and a few choral works. Much of Hughes's significant output was linked to his position with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO), also known as the Victorian Symphony Orchestra (VSO) during the 1950s and early 1960s. In this role, Hughes was employed as a music arranger and editor with the orchestra under the umbrella of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), and a significant proportion of his work involved arranging major symphonic works for performance by smaller ensembles. An example of such a project occurred when Hughes was asked to arrange Mahler symphonies especially for the purpose of the orchestra's tours to regional Australia.¹ Through this activity, Hughes was able to fine-tune his skills as an orchestrator and incorporate this expertise into his compositions.

Hughes belongs to a generation of Australian composers whose work has been neglected, primarily because their music has not been published and only exists in manuscript form. Orchestras today prefer printed scores and parts, and consequently much of the music from this era remains in the archives, unused.² As part of my project to rediscover these 'hidden

¹ Robert Hughes, personal interview with the author, 26 Feb. 2005.

² Joanna Drimatis, 'Something Old is Now New Again: Why Haven't we Heard Robert Hughes's Symphony No. 1?' *Soundscripts* 4 (2013): 78–87.

treasures,³ I explored the archives of Hughes's music and discovered some elegant works which had been untouched since their first performances. Between 1947 and the early 1950s, Hughes wrote several works for chamber orchestra or small ensemble (see Table 1), which are stored in the State Library of Victoria (SLV).⁴

Table 1. List of Works for Chamber Orchestra by Robert Hughes in the SLV

Title	Box	Date	Description
<i>Diversions on a Dance Tune</i> for Orchestra	Box 1 / 11–1 / 13	1947	1 original MS score + 2 copies
<i>Four Bagatelles</i> for String Orchestra	Box 1 / 14	1947	1 original MS score
<i>Coronach</i> for Small Orchestra	Box 3 / 4	1951?	Set of parts only (Vln 1, Vln 2, Vla, Vc, Kb, Fl, Ob, Cl in B♭, Bsn, Hn in F, Trumpet in B♭ (ad lib))
<i>Serenade</i> for Chamber Ensemble	Box 3 / 3(a)	1952	1 original MS score and set of parts, (Hp, Cl in B♭, Fl (ad lib), String Quartet, Percussion (ad lib))
2nd movt from the <i>Serenade</i> for Chamber Ensemble	Box 3 / 3(b)	1952?	Set of parts only (Cl in B♭ and Strings)

Although Hughes had written numerous works prior to 1947, he was adamant that it was the pieces composed from this year onwards that should be revived.⁵ The year 1947 aligns with Hughes's new position with the ABC and his return to Australia after the Second World War, during which he had been stationed in Papua New Guinea. Whilst Hughes was overseas, the Director of Music at the ABC, William G. James, wrote to the composer and offered him the position of music arranger and editor based with the MSO/VSO. Hughes held this position from 1946 through to 1976.

In his early years with the MSO/VSO, Hughes wrote several smaller works for the orchestra as well as other ensembles. Nevertheless, it was the Jubilee Symphony Competition in 1951 that dominated his attention, as Hughes had decided to focus his energies on composing his Symphony no. 1 for the competition.⁶ In addition, he was writing the score for the film *Mike and Stefani* (1951), as well as entering local composition competitions. He eventually wrote four versions of his Symphony no. 1, the first written in 1951 and the final in 1971.⁷ According to Hughes, the 1971 revision was a 'tighter' reworking of the score but, importantly, was 'consistent' with his 1950s compositional approach.⁸

³ Joanna Drimatis, *A Hidden Treasure: Symphony No. 1 by Robert Hughes* (PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2008).

⁴ Archives of Robert Hughes, MS 10935, MSS store, Bay 89, State Library of Victoria.

⁵ Hughes, personal interview, 19 Oct. 2006.

⁶ Drimatis, *Hidden Treasure*, 55.

⁷ Rhoderick McNeill, *The Australian Symphony From Federation to 1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 150.

⁸ McNeill, *Australian Symphony*, 156.

These smaller works gave Hughes the opportunity to explore particular compositional ideas and approaches that he applied in writing his Symphony no. 1. In the following discussion I will examine several of these works for chamber orchestra with a view to introducing this music to a new audience, and highlighting some of the compositional features that also appear in Hughes's Symphony no. 1. The works that will be examined are the *Four Bagatelles* for String Orchestra, *Coronach* for Chamber Ensemble, the *Serenade* for Chamber Ensemble and the *Serenade Movement* for Clarinet and Strings.

The Works

Although this article will not address the music of *Diversions on a Dance Tune* in detail, it is worth mentioning for its structure and reception. Composed in 1947, it is scored for chamber orchestra, although it was originally titled *Dance Rhapsody* and written for 'large orchestra' in 1946.⁹ Joyce Garretty and Matthew Orlovich have documented details of the work that include movement structure, reviews and dates of performances.¹⁰ In 2006, Hughes stated that the work was composed for a 'modest' orchestra and he considered *Diversions* to be an 'entertaining, light piece and definitely worth playing.'¹¹ It was performed by Australian orchestras between 1948 and 1954, and championed by conductors such as Eugene Goossens, Verdon Williams and Joseph Post. The piece was even performed in Manchester with the BBC Northern Orchestra (conducted by Joseph Post) and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra.¹² The work was also well received by conductor Rafael Kubelik who stated: 'Hughes's work is really good. I would like to introduce it to Europe.'¹³ Former ABC broadcaster A. E. Lloyd said of *Diversions*:

[It] consists of about a dozen free variations on the theme announced on the outset. As heard over the air, two outstanding features that impressed themselves were the fascinating character of the work and the immense care and skill displayed in the presentation. It is to be hoped that this work will be published and that we will have an early repetition.¹⁴

Diversions on a Dance Tune is important because the positive reviews it received from musicians and critics alike gave Hughes the confidence to continue on his path as a composer. The most notable feature of the work is its structure; Hughes developed his material using a theme and variations format that he later employed as the structure of the final movement of Symphony no. 1 (1951).¹⁵

There is little information available about the genesis of *Four Bagatelles* (1947) for string orchestra, except that according to the ABC Archives the work was performed by the Boyd Neel Orchestra.¹⁶ This ensemble consisted of approximately eighteen string players from England, led by violin virtuoso Frederick Grinke and conducted by Louis Boyd Neel. Sponsored by the

⁹ Matthew Orlovich, *The Music of Robert Hughes* (Masters thesis, University of Sydney, 1994), 87.

¹⁰ Joyce Dulcie Garretty, *Three Australian Composers* (Masters thesis, University of Melbourne, 1963), vol. 1, 113; Orlovich, *Music of Robert Hughes*, 87–9.

¹¹ Hughes, personal interview, 19 Oct. 2006.

¹² Orlovich, *Music of Robert Hughes*, 88.

¹³ Cited in Garretty, *Three Australian Composers*, 113.

¹⁴ Cited in Garretty, *Three Australian Composers*, 113.

¹⁵ Drimatis, *Hidden Treasure*, 130.

¹⁶ Orlovich, *Music of Robert Hughes*, 86.

British Council, the orchestra toured Australia and New Zealand in 1947, which proved to be a significant cultural event for the two countries. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether the *Four Bagatelles* were actually performed by the orchestra during this tour as there is no record of the program in Hughes's archives,¹⁷ and the reviews for the Melbourne concerts did not mention Hughes's work on the program.¹⁸ It is, however, possible that the orchestra workshopped the composition. The tour was a great success, and Skinner writes of the profound effect the Boyd Neel Orchestra had on the Australian music scene as the orchestra performed and premiered works by Bartók, Britten and other twentieth-century composers.¹⁹

The undated work *Coronach* for small orchestra was originally composed for clarinet and piano in 1951 and then arranged for clarinet and string orchestra (for the musicians of the VSO).²⁰ However, the set of parts listed by Orlovich and held in the SLV are not for clarinet and strings but for full chamber orchestra, and they have not been issued with an exact date of composition. Nevertheless, we can see from Table 1 that the parts to *Coronach* are held in the box with *Serenade*, which has been dated 1952. Therefore we can assume that the work was composed and revised between 1951 and 1952. The term *Coronach* is Irish or Scottish for a 'funeral song' with '*comh*' meaning 'together' and '*rànach*' meaning 'outcry'.²¹ The work is scored for small orchestra or chamber orchestra with strings, single winds, horn and trumpet. It has not been performed as there is no manuscript score and only the instrumental parts are available in the archives.²²

In 1952, Hughes was at his busiest as a composer. He had received many accolades from the Jubilee Symphony Competition and was winning local awards for his numerous compositions. Following the Symphony Competition, Hughes, ever the perfectionist, repeatedly revised his symphony for future performances both in Australia and overseas. Rhoderick McNeill and Garretty have both documented the revisions from the 1950s of which there are three.²³ The final revision was completed in 1971. However, Hughes continued to experiment with larger orchestral forces, composing music for symphony orchestra, film and documentaries. It is therefore interesting that he delved into a more intimate medium such as chamber music at this time.

Serenade is Hughes's most substantial chamber work written during this period and is approximately twelve minutes in duration. The work is scored for clarinet in B♭, flute (ad lib), harp, string quartet, and percussion (ad lib), with seven performers. The flute is marked ad libitum as it was expected that the clarinetist play both instruments. There are five movements in the *Serenade*, which features driving rhythmic motifs, recitative-like figures and colourful interjections by the various percussion instruments. Hughes's *Serenade* was composed for National Council of Women Jubilee Competition and was awarded First Prize in the Instrumental Composition Section. It was completed on 31 August 1952 and first performed

¹⁷ Archives of Robert Hughes, Box 6, MS 10935, MSS store, Bay 89, State Library of Victoria.

¹⁸ G.P., 'Boyd Neel Orchestra-Incomparable Art,' *Advocate*, 21 May 1947, 28; 'Boyd Neel Again Delights,' *Argus*, 19 May 1947, 15.

¹⁹ Graeme Skinner, *Peter Sculthorpe: The Making of an Australian Composer* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), 109.

²⁰ Orlovich, *Music of Robert Hughes*, 111.

²¹ 'Coronach,' *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 3rd ed.

²² *Coronach* was edited and conducted by the author for a performance by the Woollahra Philharmonic held in Sydney in December 2012. This project was funded by the State Library of Victoria through a Creative Fellowship.

²³ McNeill, *Australian Symphony*, 149–57; Garretty, *Three Australian Composers*, 119–26.

in November 1953.²⁴ The performers, from the VSO, are listed on the last page of the original manuscript: Tim White (clarinet), A. Berdell (harp), H. Lenyer and B. Rettifer (violins), P. O'Brien (viola), D. Harley (cello), E. Lighton (percussion) and Kevin McBeath Brendens (conductor).²⁵

Although Hughes had composed a work for small ensemble on this occasion, it is clear from the original manuscript that he was intending to score the work for orchestra. The score itself is quite messy as there are many amendments to chords and instrumentation marked in pencil over the original ink score. In 1955, Hughes revised the score so it could be performed by a larger ensemble. The revision was performed by the VSO, conducted by Clive Douglas.²⁶ It is this final version that was discussed in Garretty's thesis but for the purpose of this article the version for small ensemble will be examined.²⁷ Although the *Serenade* was composed after the Symphony no. 1 (1951), I wish to discuss it here because it was composed at the same time that Hughes was working on the revisions of his symphony.

The following discussion will look more closely at the respective compositional structures of the *Four Bagatelles*, *Coronach* and *Serenade*, in order to illuminate their musical connections with Hughes's Symphony no. 1 of 1951 and with the 1971 edition.

Inside the Music

In the *Four Bagatelles* of 1947, elements of Hughes's compositional approach start to emerge. Here we see the prevalence of tonal/modal ambiguity as Hughes wrestles with tonal centres around C major/minor, energetic rhythmic motives and melodies with small intervals that do not move much further than the range of a third or fourth.

The first Bagatelle is a vibrant Allegro vivace—Tempo giusto featuring driving rhythmic motifs with syncopated patterns and juxtaposing metres. In this movement, Hughes alternates 5/4 metre with 3/4 and 6/8 metres, as seen in Example 1.

Example 1. *Four Bagatelles* for String Orchestra, Bagatelle no. 1, bb. 6–10

The musical score for Example 1 shows five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The time signature changes from 5/4 to 3/4 to 6/8 and back to 5/4. The music features driving rhythmic motifs with syncopated patterns and juxtaposing metres. Dynamics include *f* and *ff*.

²⁴ Orlovich, *Music of Robert Hughes*, 115

²⁵ Robert Hughes, *Serenade for Chamber Ensemble*, unpublished manuscript, 1952.

²⁶ Orlovich, *Music of Robert Hughes*, 115.

²⁷ Garretty, *Three Australian Composers*, 126–8.

In the above example, rhythmic interest is created not only through the change in metre, but also by the accents placed on the first and fourth quavers of the first 3/4 bar, which imply a feeling of 6/8 before the following 3/4 bar. Hughes often applied differing time signatures to 'disrupt' the rhythmic flow of his main thematic material, and examples of this practice can be seen in his Symphony no. 1 (1951). For example, in the second movement, the short motivic thematic material in 2/4 is 'disrupted' by the interjection of a single bar of 5/8, creating the aural impression of the melody tripping over itself. This figure, seen in Example 2, was later to be moved to the third movement in the 1971 edition.

Example 2. Symphony no. 1 (1951), 2nd movt, bb. 22–38, cl, bn (transposed)

The musical score for Example 2 consists of four staves. The first two staves are for the Clarinet (Cl) and the last two are for the Bassoon (Bsn). The music is in 2/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing triplets. The dynamics are marked 'f' (forte). The staves are labeled 'Clarinet' and 'Bassoon' at the beginning and end of the section.

Although the time signatures are different in the two examples, Hughes's intention to alter the flow of the music through changing time signatures is consistent.

The first *Bagatelle* follows a standard ternary format, commencing in C major and contrasted by a C minor section, with Hughes modulating to the dominant before returning to the major tonality. This move from major to minor is another feature of Hughes's music and arises from modal implications created by applying a raised fourth and flattened seventh in the melodic line. Garretty explains this feature, which appears to be a hybrid of the Lydian and Mixolydian modes, as 'a scale of his [Hughes's] own devising,' and this compositional trait is repeated in the *Bagatelles* that follow.²⁸

The second *Bagatelle*, marked *Moderato*, is in a lilting 3/8 metre with G as the prevalent tonality. There is no key signature, enabling Hughes to move freely between both G major and minor. The third *Bagatelle* is an energetic *Presto* featuring syncopated motifs and fluid semiquaver figures with melodic lines comprised of small intervals in unison against lower lines that invert the initial ideas. The melodic line is punctuated by *pizzicato* motifs in the lower strings, both on and off the beat. Although C major/minor is again the tonal focus, the construction of these scalic figures implies an octatonic ideal with alternating tones and semitones. This approach to pitch is an important compositional trait of Hughes's music that he explores thoroughly in his Symphony no. 1 (1951). For example, it is possible to make a direct

²⁸ Garretty, *Three Australian Composers*, 110.

comparison between the melodic lines in the third *Bagatelle* to the scalar wind passages Hughes wrote for Movement Two of his Symphony no. 1 (1951), as illustrated in Examples 3a and 3b:

Example 3a. *Four Bagatelles* for String Orchestra, Bagatelle no. 3, bb. 22–27

The musical score for Example 3a shows the first system of 'Four Bagatelles for String Orchestra, Bagatelle no. 3, bb. 22–27'. The score includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Contrabass. A red box highlights the first measure of the Violin I, Violin II, and Viola staves, which contain a melodic line with alternating tones and semitones. The Cello and Contrabass staves are marked 'pizz.' and 'f'.

Example 3b. Symphony no. 1 (1951), 2nd movt, bb. 73–78, woodwinds

The musical score for Example 3b shows the second system of 'Symphony no. 1 (1951), 2nd movt, bb. 73–78, woodwinds'. The score includes staves for Woodwinds and a single staff for the lower woodwinds. A red box highlights the first measure of the Woodwinds staff, which contains a melodic line with alternating tones and semitones. The lower woodwinds staff is marked 'f'.

In both of the above excerpts we see alternating tones and semitones in the manner of an octatonic scale interrupted by minor thirds for variation. Hughes liked to intersperse tones with semitones with no specific intention to replicate a particular sound world, but to create his own. This issue will be addressed in further detail later in the article.

The fourth *Bagatelle* exhibits similar features to the preceding movement in terms of melodic structure, but this time the tonality shifts to A at the close of the work. Repeated rhythmic

figures and trilled crotchets and minims give energy to the melodic line that is played by all of the sections at different times throughout the movement. Later, Hughes heightens the tension by approaching the climax with an orchestral *tutti* whereby all the parts are moving either in unison, similar motion or contrary motion, a feature prevalent in many of Hughes's compositions.

Composed a few years later, *Coronach* features melodic lines with modal tendencies in both the melodic and harmonic structure. There is an effective interplay of winds and strings throughout but before the arrival of the main theme, Hughes features solo passages for the flute and clarinet respectively. The opening tonality is B \flat minor and Hughes heightens the modal colour with the use of the flattened seventh. However, B \flat minor does not prevail as Hughes changes the tonal focus to E \flat on the entry of the main theme after the cadenzas and again applies the flattened seventh to the melody.

An interesting connection can be made between the opening of *Coronach* and the opening oboe motif in the introduction to the first movement of Symphony no. 1 (see Exx. 4a and 4b).

Example 4a. Symphony no. 1 (1951), 1st movt, bb. 8–10, Ob 1



Example 4b. *Coronach*, bb. 1–3, Vln I & II



In the two examples shown above, Hughes uses the same rhythmic motif and the same melodic movement, moving to the minor third at the start of the melody and then descending a perfect fifth.

This opening figure in *Coronach* forms the basis of the melodic theme. After the opening statement, the melody is played in the first violins with the harmony moving in crotchets in the lower strings. Hughes varies his material using a 'call and response' structure as the wind and the strings alternately take the melody. However, as the climax approaches, the entire ensemble takes up the main theme, rising to a dramatic *fortissimo* until the coda, where the work closes with the flute and clarinet reiterating the original 'outcry' or 'lament.'

Serenade for Clarinet, Harp, Strings and Percussion has five movements and features musical ideas that move away from the Celtic influence we find in *Coronach*, but continues the melodic traits found in *Four Bagatelles* and Symphony no. 1 (1951). Throughout the *Serenade* there are driving rhythmic motifs, recitative-like figures and colourful interjections by the various percussion instruments. In an article on Hughes in 1954, Biddy Allen examined the *Serenade* in the context of Hughes's other works of the period. Allen writes:

The Jubilee prize-winning symphony; several excellent film documentary settings; a *Serenade for Chamber Ensemble*, coloured by Eastern scales; and the Royal Visit commissioned work, *Lynn O'Dee*, fulfil Robert Hughes's creative intentions and express his forthright honesty.²⁹

²⁹ Biddy Allen, 'Robert Hughes and Opera,' *Meanjin* 13.3 (Spring 1954): 391.

Allen's comment on the 'Eastern scales' is noteworthy. The scales arise from Hughes alternating tones and semitones in scalic passages. There is also evidence in the *Serenade* of the minor third/augmented second dichotomy—a particular feature of Hughes's melodies in Symphony no. 1, especially in the second and third movements.³⁰ Hughes explains his approach to writing melodies in the following way: 'The shape of the melody is 'minor'ish because I use a lot of close intervals by step—you know, semitone, full tone then back a semitone, and so on—and are always very close knit melodies.'³¹

This chromatic inflection described by Hughes translates into the octatonic scale that becomes an important part of the melodic structure in the second and third movements of Symphony no. 1 (1951). These features of the melodic structure are carried through to the harmonic structure, creating modal and tonal ambiguity. The ambiguity in the harmony is the result of interlocking major and minor thirds, the regular use of seventh chords, the use of pedal notes (as opposed to key centres) and other bitonal and polytonal devices.

In Symphony no. 1 (1951), Hughes implies the use of polychords when he uses both major and minor versions of a particular key simultaneously. Scott Messing has discussed this technique in the context of neoclassicism and the music of Stravinsky. Messing writes about a feature of Stravinsky's compositional style frequent in works considered to be of the neoclassical style in the 1920s. He describes this feature as, 'the sense of imperiled tonality arising from interlocking major and minor thirds in Stravinsky's 'neoclassical' works of the 1920s.'³²

Although Hughes aims for a different effect, the application of interchanging major/minor modalities (a characteristic of the symphony as a whole) does link the symphony to the music of Bartók and Stravinsky. Charles Bodman Rae has commented on the prevalence of this technique in music by these composers:

The minor third melodic inflection over a major triad is also highly characteristic of Eastern European folk music, hence it finds its way into the music of Bartók and Stravinsky (and many others). One need only recall the opening of *Le Sacre du Printemps*.³³

Although the chord discussed does not occur in precisely the same form as in Hughes's Symphony no. 1 (1951), the modal ambiguities it creates are similar to those in Hughes's work.

The first movement of the *Serenade*, marked *Lento*, opens with a harp glissando commencing on G followed by a melodic line in the upper strings that moves in a close interval range featuring both a minor third and augmented second, over a C-G pedal point in the bass. Both the application of the minor third and augmented second in the melody as well as the removal of the third in the chord in the lower strings contributes to the tonal ambiguity of the harmony. Before the clarinet enters with a cadenza-like passage, the strings finish on G with D \sharp in the upper part, which moves directly to the C chord. Throughout this movement, the string passage alternates with the virtuoso clarinet line in a call and response-like format. When the clarinet enters, however, the lower strings accompany the clarinet with the implied chords moving from C to A \flat to C to E and finally to G (see Ex. 5).

³⁰ Drimatis, *Hidden Treasure*, 114–18, 137–40.

³¹ Orlovich, *Music of Robert Hughes*, 6.

³² Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept Through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1988), 107.

³³ Charles Bodman Rae, 'The Role of the Major-Minor Chord in Panufnik's Compositional Technique,' *Andrzej Panufnik's Music and its Reception*, ed. Jadwiga Paja-Stach (Krakow: Musica Iagellonica, 2003), 140.

No 1.

After the recitative-like structure of the first movement, the second, marked Allegro, is completely contrasting in character. The C tonality from the first movement is retained, moving from the minor to major with the clarinet again as soloist. The strings perform accompanying *pizzicato* figures in *quasi chitarra* (like a guitar) style. The solo clarinet initiates the melodic phrases that are answered by the first violins, creating a call and response effect. The major / minor dichotomy is reflected by the change of pitch from E to E \flat (seen in Ex. 6, clarinet and Vln II), as well as in the scale structure, due to the raised fourth and flattened seventh of the C tonality (seen in Ex. 6, Vln I, bar 6).

Example 6. *Serenade* for Chamber Ensemble, 2nd movt, bb. 1–6 (clarinet at concert pitch)

No 2.

Allegro ♩ = c. 126 (in 3)

(The accompaniment to be even quavers - No Accents)

pp espress.

Small Chinese Drum or Snare Drum. High Pitch (with the fingers)

pp

Allegro ♩ = c. 126 (in 3)

pp pizz. - hold instrument guitar style.

pp pizz. - hold instrument guitar style.

pp pizz. - arpeggiando

pp

This shift of tonal focus and the delicate accompaniment seen in the above example drive the momentum of the music. The movement has an approximate ternary structure. There are two main contrasts: the rhythmic change in the accompaniment, and the change in tonality as the chords move from C to F to E♭ to A♭ to E and later to C♭ before returning to C via the dominant. The use of the bongo drums adds impetus to the rhythmic flow in the *pizzicato* strings and acts as an effective colouristic device to the various layers of the score. In addition, the arpeggiated figures give depth to the harmonic line and are juxtaposed against longer, more legato lines that connect seamlessly throughout the movement and sometimes overlap to create a *stretto*-like effect, as can be seen in Example 7.

This movement was rewritten for clarinet and strings by the composer to be played as a separate work, entitled *Serenade Movement*, and can be found with the *Serenade* in the Hughes archives. There is, however, no manuscript score for this revised movement; only the parts are available. The third movement, marked *Allegretto*, also features a solo melodic line in the clarinet with a string and side drum (snare) accompaniment. Hughes moves away from the C tonality by alternating between F minor and major harmonies in the viola and cello lines), as seen in Example 8.³⁴ The interlocking major/minor thirds seen in Example 8 are another feature of Hughes's writing that is evident throughout his Symphony no. 1. For example, in the first movement of the 1971 revision of the Symphony, at the start of the development (bar 106), there is evidence of both G major and minor due to the presence of both the B♭ and B♮ in the chord, as seen in Example 9.

³⁴ *Serenade Movement* was edited and performed by the author with the Woollahra Philharmonic Chamber Players in August 2013.

Example 7. *Serenade* for Chamber Ensemble, 2nd movt, bb. 108–117 (clarinet at concert pitch)

108

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

poco cresc.

mf

Hp.

mf

Drum

Perc.

108

Vln. I

p espress.

mf

Vln. II

p

Vla.

sfz

p

Vc.

sfz

p

113

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

pp

mf

dim.

Hp.

Perc.

4

Vln. I

dim.

pp

p

sfz

p

Vln. II

sfz

p

sfz

p

Vla.

sfz

p

sfz

p

Vc.

sfz

p

sfz

p

arco

pizz.

p

sfz

p

sfz

p

sfz

p

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No 3.

Allegretto (♩ = c. 88)

No 3.

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

Hp.

Small Snare Drum
(with light wooden sticks)

Perc.

pp

Allegretto (♩ = c. 88)

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

mf

p

dim.

pp

pizz.

Handwritten musical score for a symphony, page 12. The score includes staves for Flute (Fl.), English Horn (Enghorn), Clarinet (Clar.), Bass Clarinet (Bass Clar), Trumpet (Timp.), Violin (Vcl.), Viola (Vla.), Cello (Celi), and Bass (Bassi). The tempo is marked 'Poco Rall' and 'AL'. The dynamics include 'DIN.' and 'Pochissimo Meno Musso'. A red box highlights a section of the score.

Nevertheless, in spite of the tonal ambiguity created by the major/minor third in the third movement of *Serenade*, Hughes closes the movement with a clear F minor chord. The fourth movement, marked Presto, is in compound time and opens in the tonality of E. After moving through a myriad of harmonic ideas, Hughes returns to *Serenade's* home tonality of C as he concludes the movement with a C7 chord in its first inversion. The melody moves between the clarinet and the strings. Various timbral effects are provided through the use of *pizzicato* (*quasi chitarra*) and *staccato* in the strings, as well as *glissandi* in the harp. The glockenspiel provides elegant support at the start of the movement, and the duple rhythm is later accentuated by tambourine. The scalar movement in the melodic line moves only by tones, semitones or thirds, as in previous movements.

The fifth movement is a replica of the opening movement, with a virtuoso clarinet playing in a recitative style accompanied by harp and strings. The percussion contributes to the texture with a small gong. Although the opening tonality is E, as in the fourth movement, the *Serenade* comes to a close in the home tonality of C.

Conclusion

As discussed above, key features that prevail in these works give an indication of Hughes's compositional direction during this period. The chromaticism featured in Hughes's melodies is created by interspersing tones and semitones. This chromatic inflection translates into the octatonic scale, which becomes an important part of the melodic structure of Symphony no. 1. These features are carried through to the harmonic structure, creating modal and tonal ambiguity. This ambiguity is the result of interlocking major and minor thirds, the regular use of seventh chords, the use of pedal notes, and other bitonal and polytonal devices. Other features include Hughes's layering of lines (with particular emphasis on placing legato melodies against energetic rhythmic motifs), recitative figures, call and response passages, and brief sequences of *stretto*.

Although Hughes's earlier works do not exhibit the same level of sophistication as his Symphony no. 1, they are nonetheless effective and interesting pieces. Hughes and his contemporaries did their best to compose music with the tools and opportunities that were available to them and were passionate advocates for the promotion and performance of Australian music. By giving time to their music, we are acknowledging the significant contribution that composers such as Robert Hughes have made to the betterment of Australian culture.

About the Author

A graduate of the University of Western Australia, Canberra School of Music and the University of Texas at Austin, Joanna Drimatis completed doctoral work on Robert Hughes at the Elder Conservatorium of Music in 2009. She then received a State Library of Victoria Creative Fellowship to undertake further research and edit works for chamber orchestra. Joanna is active as a violinist and conductor, is a Research Affiliate at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and has recently been appointed Head of Strings at MLC School, NSW.