A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MELODIC STRUCTURE OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN SYMPHONY

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

by
Emery Jerome Lewis, B. A.

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Approved by

[Signature]
Department of Music
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to express his gratitude to
Dr. Burdette L. Green for his guidance, encouragement,
and patience in the preparation of this thesis.
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INTRODUCTION

The present study examines the melodic structure of the Afro-American Symphony by William Grant Still because melody is a most significant element in this work. This significance is supported by the composer's own viewpoint: "Melody, in my opinion, is the most important musical element. After melody comes harmony; then form, rhythm, and dynamics."\(^1\) The composer further specifies the position that melody should hold in an orchestral setting:

Another thought of great importance in orchestrating is that the melody should always stand out prominently. All else that accompanies it should be subordinated to it, and constant caution must be exercised lest the melody be obscured by having too much going against it.

Dr. Still's opinion about the primacy of melody stems from his early teens when he first heard operatic recordings. These recordings had a profound and life-long effect on his aesthetic ideas. In the following quotations, he talks about this early influence:

Charles B. Shepperson, the stepfather who came into my life when I was about eleven, was a postal clerk and a sensitive soul who loved the arts. It was he who bought Victor Red Seal records for our phonograph and took me to see the various stage shows that came to Little Rock. He initiated and fostered in me a love for the stage which has never died.\(^3\)


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 104.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 77.
Fortunately for me, nobody tried to talk me out of the two things that strikingly influenced my musical learnings, possibly because those influences were not the sort which make themselves known to outsiders as readily as others. The first was my love for grand opera, born around 1911 when my stepfather bought many of the early Red Seal recordings for our home record library. I knew then that I would be happy only if someday I could compose operatic music, and I have definitely leaned toward a lyric style for that reason.

The second influence had to do with writing for the symphony orchestra, something which has deeply interested me from the very start of my musical life.

Melody is further substantiated as "a most significant element" by the fact that the principal theme of the first movement is the prime unifying factor throughout the symphony. This theme is an original melody in the Blues idiom, an idiom that is itself inherently vocal. The composer comments on the use of this Blues theme:

Long before writing this symphony I had recognized the musical value of the Blues and had decided to use a theme in the Blues idiom as the basis for a major symphonic composition. When I was ready this project I did not want to use a theme some folk singer had created, but decided to create my own theme in the Blues idiom.5

In summary, the examination of melody in this investigation is founded on Still's specific conviction about the priority of melody and the employment of a blues melody as the thematic basis.

It is hoped that this analysis will stimulate further interest in the works of William Grant Still, so that his works might be presently studied and performed. It is also hoped that the study will reveal some practical aspects of the composer's creative philosophies that may be of some aid to the reader. Finally, this

5 Ibid., p. 11.
study by demonstrating the effectiveness of the use of the blues idiom within a symphonic work may encourage other composers to use this and similar idioms in classical forms of similar size and scope.

The Afro-American Symphony, his first symphony, is considered one of W. G. Still's finest compositions. This work has its source in the years prior the 1930's in which the composer worked as an orchestrator and arranger for William C. Handy in 1916. Verna Arvey, the wife of Dr. Still, comments on these early years and the impact of Negro folk music on the composer:

On Gayoso Street, in Memphis, he heard for the first time unadorned Blues singing. However, heard the Blues, not as something immoral and sexy, but as the yearnings of a lowly people, seeking a better life. Then and there he resolved that someday he would elevate the Blues so they could hold a dignified position in symphonic literature, and from then on he was making countless musical experiments toward that end—sometimes in the commercial arrangements he made for other people, sometimes in original compositions which he would write, revise and then discard as not being yet good enough. Most of these early efforts were lost before they were performed publicly, and more than a dozen years were to pass—years occupied with study, first-hand experience with orchestras, more observation of the Negro folk idiom, etc., before his dream finally crystallized in the Afro-American Symphony.6

The composer himself reflects upon his desire to write a symphony that utilizes the blues idiom:

Like so many works which are important to their creators, The Afro-American Symphony was forming over a period of years. [It was completed in 1930] Themes were occurring to me, were duly noted, and an overall form was slowly growing. I knew I wanted to write a symphony; I knew that it had to be an American work and I wanted to demonstrate how the blues, so often considered a lowly expression, could be elevated to

6Ibid., p. 89-90.
the highest musical level.

The symphony, a favorite of this black composer, is a tonal composition in four movements that "represents the Negro of days not far removed from the Civil War." Its melodic structure, harmony, and form are directly affected by the blues idiom. Because of the primary emphasis on the melodic line, lyricism is a prevailing mood. The harmony is traditional, but is enhanced by an extensive use of added-tone chords. All of these features contribute to the uniqueness of the composition and were responsible for its initial appeal and modern "American" sound. The Afro-American Symphony's first performance took place on October 29, 1931, at the Eastman School of Music on the American Composers' concert. It was conducted by Howard Hanson and performed by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. The published score of the Afro-American Symphony is the main source of data for this investigation. Several books provided material pertinent to the study. Eileen Southern, in her book, The Music of Black Americans: A History, supplies valuable information describing the blues idiom and blues performance practices. Her book also gives


an informative synopsis of the life and works of W. G. Still. Robert B. Haas' *William Grant Still and the Fusion of Cultures in American Music* is an importance reference because it not only contains articles written by the composer and others, but presents a study of the *Afro-American Symphony* and the *Fourth Symphony*. Additional supplements in this work include an annotated catalogue of the composer's works ranging from 1921-1972, a short pictorial outlay covering important events in the composer's life (supplying even a page from W. G. Still's notebook, in preparation of the *Afro-American Symphony*), a detailed bibliography, and a discography. This book was an invaluable aid in the initial stages of the thesis. Verna Arvey's *Studies of Contemporary American Composers: William Grant Still* contributes an authoritative description of the symphony's form in the composer's own words. This book also discusses other works by Dr. Still and includes a page from the autograph score of the Symphony in G minor which was never published. Finally, "A Birthday Offering to William Grant Still upon the Occasion of His Eightieth Anniversary" in the May 1975 issue of *The Black Perspective In Music*, edited by Eileen Southern, is a fine collection of commemorative articles by such distinguished scholars and composers as Leon Thompson, Eileen Southern, Geneva Southall, Arthur Cunningham, Hale Smith, Ulysses Kay, Karl Krueger and others. This excellent resource examines in detail the achievements and innovations of the composer and presents a "personal portrait" of the man. Several sample programs featuring the composer's works, a section called "In Retrospect...a Pictorial Survey," and a list of major works
Compiled by Eileen Southern are also included.

Complete recordings of the Afro-American Symphony include two versions conducted by Karl Krueger, one with the Vienna Opera Orchestra (New Records, 1952) and the other with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of London (New York Society for the Preservation of the American Musical Heritage, MIA, 1965). The "Scherzo," was recorded by Leopold Stokowski and the American Youth Orchestra (Columbia, 1944), and by Howard Hanson and the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra (Victor Records, 1940-1941). Finally, a more recent recording of the Afro-American Symphony is conducted by Paul Freedman (New York Society for America's Musical Heritage, Columbia, 1974).

This thesis is organized so that the first chapter begins with an examination of the general form. Form is discussed in its relationship to the melodic structure of the symphony. The various movements are delineated and similarities and differences among them are drawn. This chapter presents an overview of form as an aid to the more detailed analysis presented later in the study. Chapter II treats the blues theme in detail, stressing the harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic characteristics. Because of the thematic significance of the blues theme, this chapter forms a central focus of the study. The importance of the blues theme as a unifying factor within the symphony governs the discussion in Chapters III and IV. Chapter III traces the repetition of phrases of the blues theme throughout the work. Chapter V concerns the the development of thematic material taken from the blues theme, and analyzes this developed material according to specific melodic figures.
The final chapter describes three general compositional techniques that are employed throughout the symphony. These techniques are repetition, rhythmic and melodic variety, and chromaticism.
CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL FUNCTION OF FORM

Form plays an important part in the compositional philosophy of William Grant Still, but it takes third position in his priority of musical elements, following melody and harmony. Generally, form functions as a skeleton upon which the composer attaches his melodies. The present chapter outlines the composer's general theory of form and demonstrates how form was conceived in the initial stages of the symphony. This chapter also presents a detailed analysis of the overall form and finally draws together the similarities and differences found in the various movements.

Form in the Symphony

Even though form is the third most important element, planning the form is an early step in Dr. Still's compositional procedure. The following quotations illustrate the composer's usual sequence of composition: "I usually start by planning the formal structure of the work, although I don't stick to it slavishly;" . "My usual practice is to map out a plan which conforms loosely to the established rules.

---

Eileen Southern, "Conversation with...William Grant Still," The Black Perspective in Music 3 (May 1975): 165.
of musical form, then to deviate from it as I see fit. This method serves as a stimulant to invention and inspiration.\textsuperscript{13}

The composer mentions form in his reflection on the synthesis of the Afro-American Symphony:

It was not until the depression struck that I went jobless long enough to let the symphony take shape. In 1930, I rented a room in a quiet building not far from my home in New York, and began to work. I devised my own Blues theme (which appears in varied guises throughout the Symphony, as a unifying thread), planned the form, then wrote the entire melody. After that I worked out the harmonies, the various treatments of the theme, and the orchestration.\textsuperscript{14}

Apparently, in this case, Mr. Still began with a conception of the theme, worked out a formal scheme, and then completed the melodic structure for the entire symphony.

Within the symphony, the form of each movement generally does not adhere strictly to traditional patterns, as in a sonata allegro scheme. Such slight deviation or irregularity of form, for example, the changing of usual appearances of themes and key relationships, is justifiable if the structural clarity to the work as a whole is not impaired. In an article on the structure of music, Dr. Still talks about irregularity of form:

When judged by the laws of musical form the Symphony is somewhat irregular. This irregularity is in my estimation justified since it has no ill effect on the propor-


tional balance of the symphony.

There are four movements in this blues idiomatic work: \textit{Moderato assai}, \textit{Adagio}, \textit{Animato}, and \textit{Lento con risoluzione}. In the score, each movement has a short poem introducing it. These poems, written by Paul Laurence Dunbar, are not little "programs" but only act to establish the particular atmosphere and mood of the movement with which they are associated. All the movements are short and almost of equal length, averaging six minutes per movement.

The first movement is similar to sonata allegro form, but contains noticeable differences. After a six-measure introduction by the solo English horn, the blues theme enters in $A^\flat$ Major as the principal theme. Stated by the trumpets, the twelve-measure theme is immediately followed by a restatement, accompanied by a new treatment of spiccato strings in an even quarter-note rhythm. A short extension connects this restatement and a transitional theme which resembles a development of the principal theme. The subordinate theme, in a new tempo and mood, is not in the normal key of the dominant, $E^\flat$, but the unrelated key of $G$ Major. Next, a six-measure transitional phrase in $G$ Minor leads directly to the development of the blues theme in $A^\flat$ Major, and it is after this development section that another deviation from the sonata form is observed. There is a recapitulation of the subordinate theme in $A^\flat$ Major instead of the usual return of the principal theme in the tonic key. Following a two-measure extension and a two-measure introduction, the blues theme finally

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<td>$\frac{3}{8}$</td>
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<td>Principal Theme</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Restatement of Principal Theme (new orchestral background)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extension (overlaps end of Principal Theme)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Transition (based on figure from Principal Theme)</td>
<td>$\frac{3}{8}$</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td>Subordinate Theme</td>
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<td>$\frac{3}{8}$</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Recapitulation of Subordinate Theme</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recapitulation of Principal Theme (new rhythmic alteration in melody)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$\frac{3}{8}$</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Extension</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Coda (basically a restatement of the opening introduction)</td>
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returns. A two-measure bridge passage in the harp leads to the coda, which is basically a restatement of the opening introduction, this time assigned to the bass clarinet. (See Table One for an outline description of the form.)

The next movement is also based on the sonata scheme. Subsequent to a six-measure introduction of soft strings and muffled timpani, the principal theme of the second movement is given to the oboe and its restatement is heard in the violas. An extension and transition, comprising the next six measures, precedes a subordinate theme derived from the blues theme here stated by the flutes. Four-measure units are then the basic building blocks of a "new development of an individual sort." It is in this development that a unique shortened eight bar Blues occurs, (measures 48-55). The recapitulation of the principal theme immediately follows the development. A two-measure extension precedes the eight-measure coda which closes the movement by reiterating the material of the opening introduction. (See Table Two).

The third movement is a monothematic form. It opens with a six-measure introduction in the dominant minor key (E). A principal theme of two eight-measure statements, a and a', is heard in the violins against an innovative and effective banjo accompaniment. The restatement is then presented by the oboe in a wholly new orchestral setting. A transition and episode prefixes the development section in F Minor. More episodic material returns. A sixteen-measure recapitulation of the theme with the original banjo accompaniment, a four-measure

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### TABLE 2
AN OUTLINE DESCRIPTION OF THE SECOND MOVEMENT
OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN SYMPHONY

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<td>15</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Restatement of Principal Theme</td>
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<td>Extension</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Transition (based on a figure in the introduction)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Subordinate Theme</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>18-19</td>
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<td>Recapitulation of Principal Theme</td>
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<td>Coda (basically a restatement of the opening introduction)</td>
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extension of the episode, and a coda containing fragments from the blues theme in the accompaniment make the remaining sequence of musical events. (See Table Three).

The last movement divides into two parts which conforms only loosely to the sonata allegro formula. With no introduction, the violins in the fourth movement commence with a solemn and somber principal theme, which totals twenty-eight measures. The subordinate theme, played by the Flutes and oboes in the mediant major and tonic minor key, enters abruptly, without a previous transition. An extensive development of the subordinate theme touches upon the keys of F Major, E Major, G Major, G♭ Major, and F Minor. The principal theme recapitulates with solo celli in a sparse orchestral texture and a second development section resembling a new movement follows. Its outstanding features are its new tempo of Vivace ($\frac{3}{4} = 116$) as compared to a previous Lento ($\frac{4}{4} = 60$), its presentation of a new chromatic three-note motive, its reiteration of the blues motive, its new lightness of texture, and its complex cross-rhythms. This lengthy developments ends with an extensive coda built on a four-note motive of even eighth-notes, at a much reduced speed of Maestoso ($\frac{1}{3} = 72$). (See Table Four).

Of the four movements, the second movement more closely resembles the traditional model for sonata allegro form. Movement one has the next closest resemblance. All movements end with a coda, in which the first two movements simply repeat their introductions. Restatements are heard in all movements with the exception of the fourth. A restatement of the fourth movement's lengthy principal theme would provide too
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<td>Principal Theme</td>
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<td>Episode (derived generally from Principal Theme)</td>
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<td>Return of Episodic Material</td>
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<td>29-30</td>
<td>Recapitulation of Principal Theme</td>
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<td>Return of Episodic Material</td>
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<td>32-33</td>
<td>Principal Theme</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$\frac{3}{4} = 66$</td>
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<td>35-39</td>
<td>Development of Subordinate Theme</td>
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<td>40-41</td>
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<td>68</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
much thematic repetition when one considers the length of its recapitulation also. The second movement is the only movement that maintains one key, F Major throughout. Variety from movement to movement is obtained through melodic and rhythmic transformations and diverse orchestral treatments. Finally each movement is essentially of a different mood: first movement—"longing," second movement—"sorrow," third movement—"humor," and the fourth movement—"sincerity" or aspiration.
CHAPTER TWO

ANALYSIS OF THE BLUES THEME

The principal theme of the first movement is the thematic basis for the entire Afro-American Symphony. This original theme in the "blues" idiom not only contributes significantly to the melodic construction of the symphony, but to the other musical elements of harmony, form, and rhythm. This chapter analyzes the blues theme in detail: its singular occurrence in the first movement as a complete statement, its formal characteristics, its rhythmic characteristics, and its melodic and harmonic characteristics. Because of the blues theme's utilization within the symphony, this chapter forms a central focus of the thesis.

The Blues Theme

Prominence is given to the blues theme by its appearance as the first major theme of the symphony. Its twelve-measure statement com-

Example 1: Twelve measures of the principal theme (1st Movt. mm 7-18)

ences only after six measures of introduction. A restatement of the
blues theme immediately follows, with a new orchestral treatment of spiccato strings and accompaniment figures. In addition, in its final presentation in the recapitulation, the rhythm of the blues theme itself is altered into a lilting sequence of dotted eighths and sixteenths over pizzicato strings.

The blues theme is a twelve-measure period composed of three four-measure phrases in the structure a a' b. Each four-measure phrase consists of two distinct subphrases. It is this division into subphrases that plays an important formal role in defining a particular performance practice so long associated with the blues. This practice is essentially a "call-and-response" process. The performer presents the melody in a little more than the first two measures of a four-measure phrase. In the remaining two measures called the "break," the accompanying instrument (guitar, piano, or instrumental ensemble), comments by improvisation on what the singer has stated. During this time the singer may interject spoken asides as "Oh, Lordy," "Yes, man," "Oh, play it," etc. 18 Consequently, within one phrase of the blues theme, the first subphrase is the "call" and the second is the "response." The following example is such a phrase. Part A of Example 2 shows the first four measures of the blues theme. Part B shows the rests in measures 9 and 10 being replaced by two tied whole notes. The tied whole notes give the impression of the open space in which the accompaniment improvises. The different rhythmic figures by the horns,

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oboe, harp, and timpani are examples of some of the orchestral "comments" as conceived by the composer. This blues performance practice is a critical part of the form throughout the whole symphony and is used quite extensively.

Example 2, Part A: Four measures of the principal theme (1st Movt. mm 7-10)

Example 2, Part B: Four measures of the principal theme demonstrating the "call-and-response" practice (1st Movt. mm 7-10)

The rhythmic features of the blues theme are as interesting as its formal characteristics. The rhythm of each of the four-measure
phrases is identical. This repetition of rhythm serves two functions: to emphasize its own peculiar rhythmic qualities and to emphasize the melodic differences among the individual phrases. In reference to the previous discussion on call-and-response practice, all the rhythmic activity of the phrase, as a result, concentrates in the first two measures. This single "active" subphrase is constructed of two parts, a and b. Part a is one measure in length (measure 7) and b is a little over one measure (measure 8, first part of measure 9). Part a comprises a four-note motive; three eighth notes on \( E^b \) make up the first one and a half beats. The remaining eighth note tied to the quarter note on \( A^b \) makes up the second one and a half beats. Part b derives from part a and may be viewed as a simple extension or variation of a. The arrows in Example 3 show a gradual rhythmic reduction of part b. The eighth note rest on the first beat in part b substitutes

Example 3: First and second subphrases of the principal theme (1st Movt. mm 7-9)

for the eighth note on the first beat in part a. The following three eighth notes on \( E^b \) and \( A^b \) are then identical in both part a and b. The two tied eighth notes on \( D^b \) in part b corresponds to the quarter note
on $A^b$ in part a. The sixteenth-note figure before the $D^b$ in part b
($D^b$, $E^b$) is essentially an ornamental figure to the $D^b$. Even though
this ornament was theoretically "deleted" in Example 4 to show the
possible derivation of part b from a, it operates as a critical part
of the rhythm and by extension, causes the resulting syncopation.

Example 4: First subphrase (a) and the second subphrase (b) as a
rhythmic derivation of (a) (1st Movt. mm 7-8)

One of the reasons for the phrases of the blues theme being rhyth-
mically identical is to stress the melodic differences among the indi-
vidual phrases. These differences basically encompass two planes: (1)
the melody as an outgrowth of the harmony and (2) melody as a well-
constructed phrase group containing the basic characteristics of an
effective melody. An outstanding trait of the blues idiom is its sim-
ple harmonic pattern. The first poetic and musical line of the blues
is supported by the tonic chord. The second line is accompanied by
the subdominant chord, which moves to the tonic chord by the end of the
line. Finally, the third line employs the dominant chord and by the
end of the phrase it has resolved to the tonic. The resulting formula
is I-IV-I-V-I. $^{19}$ The blues theme in the Afro-American Symphony adheres
to this general pattern; however, the composer slightly alters this
scheme by replacing these simple triads with seventh chords. This pat-
is $I^7$-IV$^7$ - I - V$^7$ - I. Verna Arvey Still gives a piano reduction of

$^{19}$Ibid., p. 335.
the blues theme. It is within this harmonic framework that the blues

Example 5: Twelve measures of the principal theme shown in piano
reduction (1st Movt. mm 7-18)

melody is embedded. In measure 7, the descending fifth interval from
Eb to Ab outlines the tonic chord. As the subdominant chord is struck
on the downbeat of measure 8, this important motive is repeated. The
Eb, on beats one and two, forms a dissonance with the F in this sub-
dominant seventh chord. On beat three of the same measure, the D7 forms
an appoggiatura figure (Ab - D7 - Eb), leaning and resolving to the
Eb of the dominant seventh chord. The Db which follows is part of the

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20 Verna Arvey, Studies of Contemporary American Composers: William
same chord. In the last part of the measure, the flatted third, C♭, is the fifth of the augmented dominant seventh chord and resolves to the fundamental tone of A♭ in measure 8. This first four-measure phrase of the blues theme is predominantly tonic, with faster harmonic motion in measure 8.

The second four-measure phrase is essentially subdominant harmony moving to tonic harmony. The melody begins in measure 11 with its announcement of a descending fourth interval, D♭ to A♭, that outlines the subdominant chord. Subdominant harmony is sustained until beat three of measure 12. The same appoggiatura figure, mentioned in measure 8, resolves to E♭, but the E♭ is repeated, replacing the D♭ in measure 8. The line concludes with the movement of C♭ to A♭.

Finally in measure 15, the descending minor third, C♭ to E♭, traces dominant harmony. Tonic harmony is restated with the octave leap on A in the first half of measure 16. The remaining melodic line is exactly like measure 8. These four measures (measures 15-18) make up the third phrase of the blues melody in which dominant harmony predominates and eventually resolves to tonic harmony at the end of the line. Greater harmonic motion occurs in measure 17. This discussion demonstrates that the blues melody has its origin in the harmony of this twelve-bar statement. Chromatic notes or "blue notes" (D♭, C♭, and C♭ in the melody and the F♭ in the accompaniment), are derived from the blues scale which is an altered diatonic scale in which the third, the fifth, the seventh, and occasionally the sixth degrees are treated very casually and often times lowered or played out of tune.²¹ This is the composer's "theme in the blues idiom."

A final aspect of this blues melody is its skillful construction as an effective melody. Usually in a melody, there are consequent and antecedent phrases. The first eight measures of the blues theme serve as the antecedent. It starts with an idea of four measures followed by a similar one of four measures (a a'). The consequent phrase (b) is the last four measures in which the melody completes this first eight-measure idea. Repetition and contrast are also an important part of an effective melody. The first and second four-measure phrases are similar in that the descending motives (E\textsuperscript{b} to A\textsuperscript{b} and D\textsuperscript{b} to A\textsuperscript{b}) stated at the beginnings of the phrases are immediately repeated. The difference between the two phrases lies in the second half of measure 8 and measure 12. Observe the repeated D\textsuperscript{b} in a and the repeated E\textsuperscript{b} in a'. The third phrase is the most complex of the three. It contains the highest notes (G\textsuperscript{b} and A\textsuperscript{b}) to be found within the entire twelve measures of the blues theme. It is similar to phrase a by its exact repetition of the second half of measure 8.

A final aspect that makes this blues melody an effective one is its contour. This melody in simplest form is a series of falling phrase lines. In phrase a, the first fall occurs from E\textsuperscript{b} to A\textsuperscript{b}, a perfect fifth. The second fall is shorter: a perfect fourth from D\textsuperscript{b} to A\textsuperscript{b} in phrase a'. Finally, in the first half of b, the shortest fall that exists is a minor third, G\textsuperscript{b} to E\textsuperscript{b}, but this fall is above the point from which the first fall was initiated. Here in phrase b, the climax occurs. The most pronounced and longest fall starts at A in measure 16 and descends to the octave. Within each four-measure phrase, there are three distinct falls, and the very last fall of all three phrases has a starting point on E\textsuperscript{b}.
The diagram that follows illustrates this wavy contour of the blues melody. The x represents the climax. The straight line shows a direct descent to the lower note. The connecting brackets show ascent back to Eb by way of D#. The wavy lines show an elaboration of the basic fall involving more notes in the descent.

Example 6: Contour of the blues theme involving repeated falls (1st Movt. mm 7-18)

In summary, the blues theme is the thematic basis of the Afro-American Symphony. Through its: (1) temporal position, (2) immediate restatement, (3) alteration of its melodic line in the recapitulation, and (4) different orchestral treatments, the blues theme is given prominence. This principal theme of the first movement is a tripartite structure in the form of the common twelve-bar blues. Salient features of this important theme are its utilization of the blues' call-and-response pattern, the identical rhythm in each four-measure phrase, the adherence to the typical blues harmonic outline and employment of "blue notes," and the melodic characteristics of the theme. This discussion of the blues theme establishes an important background for the chapters to follow.
A reiteration of the theme "in the Blues idiom" within all four movements of the symphony acts as a prime unifying factor. This reiteration takes many forms, from a blues form shortened to eight bars to condensed motives of the blues theme. This chapter traces the various guises of the theme as they occur throughout the symphony. These guises appear in order according to the degree of their resemblance to the original theme.

Eight-Bar Blues Form

The most exceptional example of the alteration of the blues theme is found in the development section of the second movement (measures 48-55). It is a condensed form of the twelve-bar blues which is here reduced to eight measures. Often in blues practice, the twelve-bar form is contracted to eight measures or expanded to sixteen. This contraction as seen in Example 7, consists of three two-measure phrases of the varied blues theme and one two-measure insertion containing a fragment of the original blues theme. The resulting form is a a' b a: a (the first two-measure phrase), a' (the previous two-measure phrase

slightly altered), b (the two-measure insertion), and a (the initial two-measure phrase repeated).

Example 7: Shortened form of the twelve-bar blues (2nd Movt. mm 48-55)

Part a' of this "eight-bar" blues form differs from part a in that its initial interval is a descending fourth in the first half of measure 50 as opposed to a descending perfect fifth in the first half of measure 48. In addition, in the second half of measure 50 in part a', the C in the fourth beat substitutes for a D in beat four in measure 48 of part a. Part b of the eight-bar form is the special two-measure insertion that functions as an integral part of the melodic line and form. It commences like part a in the first half of measure 52 with its descending fifth interval. But the second half of the measure contains a succession of "blue notes" taken from a fragment of the blues theme as they occurred in the original key of A. Major. (See 1st Movt. measures 7-8). This succession is: D (the sixth degree of the scale acting as an appoggiatura to the following E), E (the flatted sixth), C (the flatted fifth), and A (the minor third degree of the scale).

In comparing the form of the twelve-bar blues (a a' b) and the present eight-bar blues (a a' b a), the similarity is striking. The melodic outlines in part a and part a' of both forms are identical;
only part b (measures 15-18) of the twelve-bar form and part a (measures 54-55) of the eight-bar form are significantly different.
It is important to observe that just as the rhythm of each four-measure phrase of the blues theme is identical, so is the rhythm in each two-measure phrase of this altered blues theme. This exactness of rhythm functions again to emphasize the melodic differences between the individual phrases. In conjunction with the idea that "constants" may be used to emphasize "variables," the melodic outline in both the original and the shortened blues themes is substantially the same and may be considered a "constant" so that the formal difference between the two themes, the "variable," is emphasized.

Finally, two other common features that exist between the two forms are: their similar harmonic treatments and their similar practice of blues "call-and-response." The eight-bar form generally adheres to the simple harmonic pattern of I-IV-I-V-I. In part a, tonic harmony predominates. In part a', subdominant harmony is prevalent, returning to tonic harmony at the end of the line. And in repeated part a, dominant harmony is sustained until tonic harmony returns at the close of the phrase. The special two-measure insertion is supported by a descending chromatic bass. $D^b$ in the bass moves up a major third to $F$ and descends through $F^b - E^b - D^b - D^b - C$ (the dominant tone). This melodic "slide" in the bass acts as a link between part a' and part a. Another characteristic of the blues idiom utilized in this form is the procedure of call-and-response. In parts a, a', and a, in the first measures (measures 48, 50, and 54), the "solo" oboe announces the blues theme and in the "break" (measures 49, 51, and 55), the clarinet and bassoon "comment."
Motivic Guises of the Blues Theme

This section of the chapter concerns shorter phrases of the blues theme as they recur throughout the symphony. The following example presents a unique context for the reappearance of the blues motive in the coda of the third movement. Melodically, the blues motive is complete, with no alterations, as it is presented in measures 95 and 96 in the example below. These two statements of the blues motive are rhythmically transformed into a strict eighth-note rhythm that is a common feature of the majority of examples in this section dealing with variations of the blues motive. Furthermore, parts of the blues motive are seen throughout this eight-measure example. In measure 91, the blues motive is stated from $E^b$ to $D^b$ as it follows the original melodic outline. A rhythmic sequence with interval contraction immediately follows in measure 92. Finally, the descending fifth figure ($E^b - A^b$) that initiates the blues motive, is seen in measures 97 and 98. This figure is repeated by the trumpets and trombones until the end of the movement.

Example 8: Recurrence of the blues motive in a coda (3rd Movt. mm 19-98)

![Musical notation](image)

The next example is almost identical to phrase a (1st Movt. measures 7-10) of the blues theme. With the exception of an added
tone C (in measure 30 on the second and a half beat in Example 9), the melodic outline is the same. Even the initial descending interval of a fifth is separated by a rest, and is immediately repeated as in the original blues theme. The fairly strict eight-note rhythm, in measures 30 and 31, gives each note of the melody a chance to be heard distinctly. A sequence of this blues theme follows in measures 33-35. The "call" of these two four-measure phrases consists of the first eight beats and its "response" are the remaining four beats. The harmonic outline (I\textsuperscript{7} - IV\textsuperscript{9} - V\textsuperscript{7} - I) supports the two phrases in the transitory keys of A Major and C Major. This diminutive harmonic scheme is a slight variation of the original blues pattern.

Example 9: Variation of the blues theme and its sequence (4th Movt. mm 29-31)

A third example shows a variation of the blues theme that is similar in harmonic and rhythmic treatment to the previous example. This varied blues theme is presented in the key of A\textsuperscript{b} Major, followed by its sequence a major third lower in F Major. The harmonic pattern supporting these two phrases is the same, I\textsuperscript{7} - IV\textsuperscript{7} - V\textsuperscript{7} - I\textsuperscript{7}. A similar strict eight-note rhythm allows each note to separately stand out. The complete blues phrase in measures 136-137 is preceded by a four-note figure that is stated twice. This figure contains a descending fifth interval and an ascending fifth interval that is ornamented
with an appoggiatura ($D^\flat$), setting the stage for the short announcement of this altered blues theme. The example below is derived note-for-note from the original blues theme. Another occurrence like the phrases below is seen later in this same movement in measures 168-171 in B Major and again starting in D Major.

Example 10: Another variation of the blues theme and its sequence (4th Movt. mm 134-141)

The introductory theme of the first movement contributes the following example. Basically in even eight notes, this theme contains the blues motive in measures 3 and 4. The tone $E^\flat$ is initially stated on beat one of measure one and is repeated until the last half of beat two in the second measure. This reiteration of a single tone substitutes for the melodic figure of the descending fifth that is seen in the real appearance of the blues theme. The first two measures are divided into two rhythmic groups by an eighth rest that occurs on the first beat of measure two. This introductory theme, introduced with a wailing English horn, establishes the mood of the movement and subsequently of the entire symphony and presents a thematic "sampling" of the blues theme.

Example 11: Introductory theme containing blues motive (1st Movt. mm 1-3)
Example 12 is an interesting and probably the most subtle of all the examples concerning variations of the blues theme. Like some of the previous examples, this subordinate theme of the first movement: (1) deletes the descending fifth figure and (2) divides itself into two distinct rhythmic groups. It is here that all basic similarities end. This altered theme has several important contrasting features. Its division into two rhythmic groups extends over the bar line. The eighth rest occurs on beat three of measure 45 as opposed to the expected position of beat one in measure 46. Its melodic pattern involves some interval contractions in comparison to the original intervals in the blues theme. The following diagram in Part A of Example 12 demonstrates the exact intervallic relationship between the two themes. The melodic line of both themes is sketched, with the lower A♭ in the blues theme being omitted. The blues theme is "reconstructed" to show this deletion and follows the exact rhythm of the subordinate theme. "W" indicates whole step, "H" indicates half step, and "MT" indicates a minor third. A final aspect of the subordinate theme is that it uses Example 12, Part A: A comparison of the intervallic relationship between the subordinate theme and the blues theme
Interval Relationship

Subordinate Theme \( B_{\text{W}}A_{\text{W}}B_{\text{W}}A_{\text{W}}G_{\text{MT}}E_{\text{W}} \)

Blues Theme \( E_{\text{H}}^bD_{\text{H}}^bE_{\text{W}}^bD_{\text{W}}^bC_{\text{W}}^bA_{\text{MT}}^b \)

Example 12, Part B: Subordinate theme (2nd Movt. mm 45-46) and the reconstructed blues theme (1st Movt. mm 7-8)

an identical rhythmic motive from the original blues theme in its melodic construction. This motive consists of three eighth notes, two sixteenth notes, and an eighth note tied to a longer note of indeterminate length \( (\text{1/8} + \text{1/16}) \). None of the previous variations of the blues theme employ the sixteen-note figure as found in measure 8 of the blues and measure 46 of the subordinate theme.

The final illustration is taken from the introduction of the second movement. The example below contains in measure 3, a five-note motive or fragment taken from the blues theme which is stated in the key of F Major. Just as the introductory theme of the first movement contained a fragment of the blues motive to augment or emphasize the blues theme at its first appearance, the introductory theme of this
second movement contains a fragment of the shortened blues theme that appears forty measures later (See Example 6).

Example 13: Introductory theme containing blues fragment (2nd Movt. mm 1-3)

This chapter demonstrates the composer's skill for thematic transformation. In his alterations, Dr. Still maintains the general melodic contour and outline of the blues theme, so that rhythmic transformations play a critical part in the formation of these new guises. A common rhythmic pattern that is utilized in these alterations is a succession of even eighth notes. The appearance of these various recurrences of the blues theme throughout the symphony is an important unifying factor.
CHAPTER FOUR

FIGURES FROM THE BLUES MOTIVE

The previous chapter presents whole phrases of the blues theme as they occur throughout the symphony. This repetition of thematic material is an important unifying technique. The present chapter concerns yet another technique of unification, the development of thematic material and how parts of the blues theme are manipulated. W. C. Still reflects on thematic development: "Of great importance to musical architecture is the development of thematic material. Take, for instance, the process of extending a motif into a phrase. This should be a spiritual process rather than a mental process. This sentiment seems all the more valid in association with the composer's statement that melody is "the most important musical element."

The analysis in this chapter reveals compositional devices and techniques the composer utilizes in the construction of melody and evidences the refinement of detail that goes into the formation of these melodies. The chapter is divided into four sections with each one analyzing a figure taken from the blues motive in measures 8 and 9 of the first movement. Example 14 illustrates the "storehouse" motive that is the source of figures w, x, y, and z below. The blues motive is shown in parenthesis and its figures are in brackets, with

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each figure being individually demonstrated. Each figure is used extensively throughout the symphony and is discussed in the order that it appears within the blues motive. Alternate names for each figure are respectively labelled: the "two-note" figure \((w)\), the "appoggiatura" figure \((x)\), the "chromatic-turn" figure \((y)\), and the "spiritual" figure \((z)\).

Example 14: Blues theme motive and developmental figures contained in it (1st Movt. mm 7-9)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Analysis of FIGURE W} \\
\text{Figure } w \text{ is a one repeated-note figure, in which the second note is the same duration and pitch as the first. This exact figure of two eighth notes is utilized in all four movements of the symphony. But rhythmic variations of this figure occur as frequently as the original. This section of the chapter discusses both usages.} \\
\text{The first theme that significantly employs figure } w \text{ is an extended phrase. This phrase is a continuation of a countermotive that is "commenting" during a blues "break."}
\end{align*}
\]

Example 15: A transitional theme employing figure \(w\) (1st Movt. mm 29-32)
The two-note figures occur on the strong beats of the measure, alternating on beats three and one, and outline a minor tonic triad with added sixth in A Major. In measure 32, this rhythmic sequence breaks and figure w is strung on the weak beat of four. An important transition immediately succeeds the four-measure phrase which contains this two-note figure in Example 16. This transition consists of a two-measure phrase, followed by its real sequence and its tonal sequence which is repeated. In addition, accompanying countermotives, which essentially fill in the gaps of the transition's melodic line, contain the two-note figure also. These countermotives change their melodic character as the tonal sequence of the transition is announced.

In the transition, figure w falls on beat one. In the countermotive, the figure falls on beat three. Figure w is more pronounced rhythmically as the tempo gradually accelerates from Moderato assai ( = 88) to Più mosso ( = 112). Moreover, the figure on the first beat in the countermotives may be considered as a slight variation of figure w. These figures are in broken brackets.

Example 16: Another transitional theme and its countermotive employing figure w (1st Movt. mm 33-40)
As the tempo changes once again (Andante cantabile, \( \frac{3}{4} = 72 \)), after the end of the transition section, a new theme appears in G Major. With such a drastic change in atmosphere and a subordinate theme now "in the style of a Negro Spiritual," figure w continues to be employed. The ensuing four-measure phrase in Part A of Example 17 is part of the restatement of the subordinate theme, now in G Minor. The two-note figure successively occurs on beat four in measures 66-68. The second part of the present example is drawn from the recapitulation of the subordinate theme. This particular case exemplifies how much figure w functions as an intergal part of the melodic structure of this climactic phrase. The two-note figure is seen generally on every other strong beat, in addition to occurring on the weak portions of the beat, as in measures 108 and 110. Syncopated figures in measure 110 (\( \text{\textit{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} } \)) and measure 111 (\( \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \)) may be viewed as a basic elaboration of figure w. (See discussion below).

Example 17, Part A: The subordinate theme employing figure w in its restatement (1st Movt. mm 66-69)

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Example 17, Part B: The subordinate theme in its recapitulation employing figure w (1st Movt. mm 108-111)

The development section of the first movement makes use of figure w as a building block. Approximately half of the measures in the development start with the two-note figure beginning on the first beat of the measure, the strongest metrical point. The use of this figure is similar to the transitional theme in Example 16. Not only does this metrical position impart greater prominence to figure w, but figure w outlines the contour of the rising melodic line. Starting on $E^b$ in register $c^3$, this figure sketches the pitches $E^b$ (measure 74) - $A^b$ (measure 82) - $D^b$ (measure 84) - $E^b$ (measure 85). As in the previous examples, variations of the two-note figure may be seen in this development. The even quarter notes in measures 75, 79, and 84 are conceivable as augmentations of figure w in which the two-note figure is doubled in time value. These are indicated in broken brackets.

The third movement, a dancelike scherzo in 4/4 time, contains figure w in its primary form and in variation. Figure w is wielded to

Example 18: The development theme employing figure w (1st Movt. mm 74-75, 78-79, and 82-83)
create a "humorous aspect of religious fervor."\textsuperscript{25} The first eight measures of principal theme comprise Part A of Example 19. Figure w is stressed on the initial beats of measures 11, 12, and 14, as its melodic tones A\textsuperscript{b}, E\textsuperscript{b}, and A\textsuperscript{b} trace the tonic triad in this simple series of V-I harmonic progressions. Rhythmic variations (\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{\textdegree}\textsuperscript{\textdegree}}), also on beat one, appear at the beginnings of measures 7, 8, and 10. In Part B, the main theme, in its recapitulation, is altered (a') so that the more significant melodic changes are in the second half of each four-measure phrase. This part of the example presents one of Dr. Still's finest demonstrations of melodic variation for the purpose of contrast. Figure w is seen in measure 65 on the third and fourth beats and in measure 68 on the third beat. Newer rhythmic variances (\textsuperscript{\textdegree}\textsuperscript{\textdegree} in measure 66 and \textsuperscript{\textdegree} in measure 70) are seen on the principal beat.

Example 19, Part A: Eight-measure period of the principal theme employing figure w (3rd Movt. mm 7-14)

Example 19, Part B: Eight-measure period from the recapitulation employing figure w (3rd Movt. mm 63-70)

Example 20 shows a four-measure phrase that contains a rhythmic idea (\(\text{\textbullet, \textbullet, ., \textbullet}\)) and its sequence in the first two measures. In these measures, figure \(w\) is seen on beat one in measure 35 and beat two in measure 36. The two remaining measures form a chain of one rhythmic idea (\(\text{\textbullet, ., \textbullet}\)), on the off-beats. The two-note figure alternates on beats one and three. This transitional phrase acts as an introduction to a short but active episode, preceding the main theme's development.

Example 20: A transitional phrase employing figure \(w\) (3rd Movt. mm 35-38)

A final example within this part of the section dealing with figure \(w\) is the episode previously mentioned. It is an eight-measure
period containing both the original figure and a variation of it.

Figure w occurs on the strongest beats of measures 39-41, 44, and 46 on the single tone E\textsuperscript{b}. Variations of this figure are shown in broken brackets. They occupy the weakest beats of the measure, alternating on beats two and four. The last four-measure phrase is on the bass staff to illustrate the predominate two-voice contrapuntal texture. The "answerings" that go back and forth between the orchestral instruments may be viewed as a shortened form of the blues practice of call-and-response.

Example 21. An episode employing figure w and a variation of it (3rd Movt. mm 39-46)

![Musical notation](image)

The second part of this section of the analysis of figure w discusses an outstanding variation of the original two-note figure, a variation that utilizes two basic rhythmic devices: augmentation and syncopation. A syncopated rhythm of a quarter note followed by a half note \( \frac{1}{2} \) forms the variant of figure w. This particular figure is the basic building block of the principal theme of the fourth movement, and provides a rhythmic counterpoint to the figure of a half note followed by a quarter note \( \frac{1}{2} \) found in the bass. The entire principal theme is presented below in Example 22, in which the quarter-half note variation of figure w occurs in measures 1, 3, 13, 17, 19, and 25, as shown by brackets.
Other forms of figure \( w \) are in profusion in this principal theme in association with its main building block. A two-note unit of even quarter notes (\( \frac{1}{4} \frac{1}{4} \)) occurs across the bar line in measures 10-10, 24-25, and in the single measure 19. A retrograde of the quarter-half figure (\( \frac{1}{4} \frac{1}{2} \)) extends the bar line in measures 11-12 on E and 21-22 on G. Finally, some other variants are \( \frac{1}{4} \frac{1}{4} \) in measure 5, and \( \frac{1}{4} \frac{1}{2} \) (extending the bar line) in measures 20-21, 22-23, and 26-27. All of these variations are shown in broken brackets.

Example 22: The principal theme's use of figure \( w \) and variants of it (3rd Movt. mm 1-28)

Analysis of FIGURE X

Figure \( x \) is a three-note figure comprising the interval of a perfect fifth. The middle note, D\( ^4 \), produces an upward half-step inflection that resolves to E\( ^b \); hence the label, "appoggiatura"
figure (See Example 14 above). This figure assumes various forms throughout the symphony. It is seen not only in its original form, but in its inversion and in its retrograde-inversion. This figure also expands to the intervals of the seventh and sixth, and contracts to the interval of the fourth.

The initial example is taken from an expanded development section (measures 128-219) of the fourth movement. Figure x is repeated six times in succession as shown in Example 23. Figure x is metrically

Example 23: An accompanying phrase employing figure x (4th Movt. mm 146-149)

![Musical notation image]

placed so that the half-step inflection occurs on the strong beats, alternating on beat two and one. This position gives greater melodic significance to this figure's most salient characteristic, its appoggiatura effect.

A transitional theme in the first movement employs figure x in retrograde. In measure 33, the melodic sequence is now E - D - A.

Example 24: A transitional theme's use of a variation of figure x (1st Movt. mm 33-38)

![Musical notation image]

This figure is then repeated twice in the following measure. A sequence
of the first two measures immediately follows in measures 35-36 in which the retrograde figure is announced a perfect fourth higher.

Finally, in measures 37-38, the original half-step inflection is expanded to a whole step from $B^\# - A^\#$. In all of these six measures, the inflected note is always viewed on the weak beat or the weak portion of the beat. This rhythmic procedure allows the two-note figure $w$, which was observed in the same example (16) of the previous section of this chapter, to have greater prominence.

Another alteration of figure $x$ is contained in the two-measure extension below. This alteration is an inversion of the "appoggiatura" figure. In measure 112, the half-step inflection proceeds in an upward direction and is found at the bottom of the three-note figure. Starting on $F$ on beat two, this inflection resolves to $G$. The new melodic sequence is $F^\# - G - D$. A repetition of this three-note figure occurs an augmented second lower as $E^b - F^b - C^b$, in measure 113. The two top notes of the perfect fifth interval, $D^\#$ and $C^b$, are the climactic notes of these two measures, with each subphrase respectively terminating on $C$ and $B^b$. This two-measure extension acts as a very short but important introduction to the recapitulation of the blues theme in the first movement.

Example 25: A two-measure phrase employing a variation of figure $x$
(1st Movt. mm 112-114)

![Musical notation]

The next usage of the "appoggiatura" figure involves its retro-
grade-inversion. The interval of a perfect fifth is maintained but the half-step inflection occurs now at the bottom of the three-note figure in a downward direction. Example 26, Part A, is a countermotive to the principal theme of the second movement. The three-note figure is rhythmically augmented, consisting of two quarter notes and one dotted quarter note. Since this countermotive is primarily constructed of large leaps, the "appoggiatura" figure comfortably fits into the melodic framework. Part B of this example is a "commenting" motive that occurs in the recapitulation of the subordinate theme of the first movement. The bass clarinet plays figure x on beat four in measure 105 and on beat one of measure 106.

Example 26, Part A: A countermotive employing a variation of figure x (2nd Movt. mm 8-11)

Example 26, Part B: A "commenting" motive employing a variation of figure x (1st Movt. mm 105-106)

The retrograde-inversion form is further utilized in the two bass progressions below. In both parts of the present example, the three-note figure involves the same tones (A♭ - D♭ - D♭). In Example 27, Part A, figure x occurs in measures 81 and 82 of this bass line taken from the development section of the first movement. In Part B, figure
x is seen in the first three beats of measure 3. Here, the "appoggiatura" figure serves a modulatory function.

Example 27, Part A: A bass progression employing a variation of figure x (1st Mvt. mm 80-82)

Example 27, Part B: Another bass progression employing a variation of figure x (2nd Mvt. mm 1-5)

The present example shows the only singular occurrence of figure x as an expanded sixth. This variation has the same contour as the original figure. Example 28 is drawn from the principal theme of the third movement. Figure x occurs in the latter part of measure 88 and the first part of measure 89. The inflected half-step, $D^\flat$, takes place on the strongest beat of measure 89, thereby giving an emphasis to this expanded figure. These same two measures are reiterated in measures 91 and 92.

Example 28: The principal theme's use of a variation of figure x (3rd Mvt. mm 87-94)
The largest interval involved in the "development" of figure x is the expanded seventh. The first item concerning this interval is taken from the development of the fourth movement. In Part A of the example that follows, figure x occurs in measure 38 as three eighth notes in the melodic sequence $E^\# - E^b - F$. This same "appoggiatura" figure is seen two measures later rhythmically augmented. This augmented form commences in measure 42, with the $E^\#$ on the last eighth beat and continues through the first two beats of measure 43. The first two chromatic notes in both versions of figure x are a basic repetition of the chromatic figure in measures 37 and 41. The $F^\#$ within figure x is the low climax of these two four-measure phrases. A similar treatment of the expanded seventh is seen in Part B of this example. Figure x simply exists as three quarter notes in measure 63.

Example 29, Part A: Use of figure x as an expanded seventh (4th Movt. mm 37-44)

Example 29, Part B: A similar use of figure x as the expanded seventh (4th Movt. mm 61-64)

The last example in this series concerning the expanded seventh as a variation of figure x is from a falling violin line in the fourth
movement. Figure x takes place as the final three beats of measure 178. In this particular example, there is an interesting overlap between this expanded seventh figure and the original perfect fifth figure. The original figure follows the melodic sequence of $E^b - A - B^b$ and occurs on the last note of measure 178 and the first two notes of measure 179; it is shown in brackets in the example. The "hap-hazard" melodic line of this two-measure phrase is characteristic of the light and playful atmosphere in this section of the movement.

Example 30: An overlap between the expanded seventh figure and the original figure x (4th Movt. mm 178-179)

![Musical notation]

The final example concerns the utilization of the contracted or diminished fifth as a variant of figure x. These contracted fifths are enharmonically spelled as augmented fourths in measures 47-56. The decision concerning the quality of these intervals as diminished fifths is based on the underlying chord structures. This interpretation makes this contracted fifth variant even closer in its relationship to the original appoggiatura-like figure of a perfect fifth. More importantly, these diminished fifths are "blue notes." In Example 31 below, figure x as the retrograde-inversion is reiterated twelve times. This significant repetition is accomplished through sequential treatment. In measures 47-48, figure x commences on $E^b$ in the bass. A major seventh chord on $E$ ($E G^b B D$) is the chord structure of these first two measures. The $A^b$, on the third beat of both measures, is an alternate
spelling for $B^b$. This $B^b$ is the diminished fifth or "blue note." A

Example 31: A bass progression making extensive use of variant figure x
(4th Movt. mm 47-60)

melodic and harmonic sequence immediately follows in the next two-measures commencing on $G^b$. In these two measures, the "blue note" is $D^b$ (C♯). The next four measures begin on $G^b$, with measure 55 of new melodic material interrupting this chain of repeated x figures. The melodic figure $G^b - D^b - C$ is again stated in measure 56. The $D^bb$ (C♯) is the diminished fifth. Finally, the last four measures of this example are an augmented fourth lower than the previous figure, on $C^b$.

Even though the harmonic structure underlying this figure is of the same type as the previous chords, the function of the tones in this particular three-note figure is reversed. The last inflected note, $G^b$, is now the fundamental tone of the chord ($G^bB^bD^bbF^b$) and the $C^b$ is the enharmonic spelling for $D^bb$, the diminished fifth of the chord. This almost imperceptible but imaginative change in the melodic-harmonic of the bass in measures 57-60 is a fine illustration of the composer's genius for creating variety by the simplest means.
Analysis of FIGURE Y

Figure y is a three-note figure characterized by the juxtaposition of two chromatic tones. In the original blues motive, this figure consists of the tones D^\# and D^b separated by an E^b. (See Example 14 above). This figure is consequently labelled the "chromatic-turn" figure. As with the other figure types in this chapter, figure y takes on many shapes within the symphony. One variation of figure y is seen in an alternation of major and minor tones within the same measure or adjacent measures. This alternation is primarily seen in conjunction with the "blue notes" of the scale. These notes are the altered third, fifth, and seventh degree and occasionally the sixth degree of the diatonic scale and are usually lowered. A second variation involves this juxtaposition on a vertical plane in which one chromatic tone is present in the melody and the other is present "below" it in the harmony. A final, though less substantial variation of figure y is a melodic figure composed of a half step followed by a "free" leap in the opposite direction.

A primary illustration of the "chromatic-turn" figure is observed in the development of the first movement. Figure y is stated three times: in measures 90, 91, and 93. Each statement has a somewhat different rhythmic pattern. The wavy melodic line as a result of the "chromatic-turn" figure, and its accompanying rhythm, plays an important part in establishing the dance-like "swingy" atmosphere of this section.

Example 32, Part A: Use of figure y in a development section (1st Movt. mm 90-93)
In the initial part of the development, the phrase in Part B below may be interpreted as a basic transformation of the original "chromatic-figure" involving inversion and interval expansion. The melodic motive $G_b - A_b - C_b$, as seen in measures 82, 84, and 85, is an important unifying factor in this development section.

Example 32, Part B: A possible derivation of figure y (1st Movt. mm 82-85)

Another example of figure y is found in the subordinate theme of the second movement. In measure 28 figure y encompasses beat three and four. In measure 29, figure y is repeated but with the last note of the three-note figure being augmented to form a half note as a substitute for the quarter note in the previous measure. Figure y is an important unifying element that is used extensively in the second movement. A derivation of the "chromatic-turn" figure is taken form the second movement and is seen in Part B of Example 33 as a sequence of upper neighboring-tone figures. The last tone of this three-note unit is a half step away from its previous tone as opposed to an expected whole step. This change is a subtle one and illustrates the composer's technique for substituting "little" melodic transformations that contribute so significantly to the pervading mood.
Example 33, Part A: The subordinate theme employing figure y (2nd Movt. mm 28-29)

Example 33, Part B: A possible derivation of figure y (2nd Movt. mm 74-77)

In the development section of the third movement, figure y is seen as a singular occurrence in the retrograde form. This variation begins on beat three of measure 49 and continues through beats one and two of measure 50. Its melodic sequence (D♭ - E♭ - D♮) is the reverse of the original figure y. The rhythmic pattern of this example stands in direct contrast to the "gapped" rhythmic surroundings in this movement.

Example 34: A retrograde form of figure y (3rd Movt. mm 49-51)

The second part of this section on the analysis of figure y draws attention to a very important variation of the "chromatic-turn" figure. This variation concerns a close juxtaposition of major and minor tones often in the same measure or adjacent measures. These inflected notes primarily include the "blue notes" of the scale. As a result of this simple compositional technique, the composer is able to convey the mood
of the blues idiom by these fluctuating tones with great effect in the construction of his melodies.

The following discussion treats the alternation of the major and minor third degree of the scale. Example 35, Part A is extracted from the principal theme of the second movement. In the eight-measure period that follows, the varying of tones occurs twice; once in measure 7 and again in measure 11. The major third A� is emphasized in measure 7 because of its forceful syncopated position within the beat and because it is the first note of the melody. Its minor third then is announced on beat three, a strong metrical point in the measure. In measure 11, a similar procedure is followed. The minor third is repeated on the fourth beat of the measure which substitutes for the C� on the same beat in measure 7, and this short static motion imparts a "lull" in the melodic contour of this eight-measure period. A blue note of the flatted seventh (E♭) occurs in measures 9, 10, and 13. In Part B, the

Example 35, Part A: The principal theme utilizing a variation of figure y (2nd Movt. mm 7-14)

[Diagram of the musical notation]

development of the principal theme repeats its melodic material. Measure 35 below is a repeat of measure 7 in Part A above. In the next measure, the major third degree is reiterated at the end of the triplet.
Example 35, Part b; The developmental theme's use of a variant of figure y (2nd Movt. mm 36-37)

A second example, concerning the varying of the major and minor third degrees, originates from a solo cello melody in the restatement of the subordinate theme of the first movement. The juxtaposition of the two chromatic tones in measures 61-62 is separated by only an eighth beat. The minor third appears in the triplet figure in measure 61 and the major third is announced on beat one of the following measure.

Example 36. Use of a variation of figure y in the subordinate theme (1st Movt. mm 61-63)

Example 37 shows two items in which the alternation of the major and minor degrees occur side by side. Part A is a four-measure transitional phrase preceding the coda of the fourth movement. In measure 190, the major third is stated twice, starting on beat one, and is followed by the minor third present in the sixteenth-note figure. The B then acts as a one-beat separation between the C and the restatement of C on beats four and five. This melodic sequence is repeated three times.
Example 37, Part A: A transitional phrase utilizing a variation of figure y (4th Movt. mm 190-194)

Part B demonstrates a similar treatment involving the appearance of a major third followed immediately by the minor. The first six measures of this chromatic melody are a modulatory sequence. Measures 47-48 contain a major seventh chord on E. G# and F♯ (G♯) are the major and minor third of this chord. A major seventh chord on G♯ is found in the following sequence. Its major and minor thirds are B♭ and A♯ (B♭). Finally, in measures 51-52, a major seventh chord on G♭ is now employed. In measure 51, the fluctuating seventh (F - F♭) of the chord is stated. Then in measure 52, the chord's major and minor third, B♭ and A♭ (B♭♭), are announced by the trumpets and oboes.

Example 37, Part B: Another transitional phrase utilizing employing a variation of figure y (4th Movt. mm 47-55)

Next is seen the juxtaposition of chromatic tones involving the flatted seventh degree. In the example, this eight-measure period, the principal theme of the third movement, utilizes the alternation of the major and minor seventh over the bar line and again later within one measure. In measure 15 of Example 38 below, a minor seventh, C♭, is
stated on the last beat of the measure. Its major "partner" occurs on beat four in measure 16. This is the instance in which the two chromatic tones occur over the bar line. Then in measure 20, the minor and major seventh are separated by only a quarter beat. Both types of occurrences contain the same melodic outline ($G^b - E^b - G^b - E^b$). Only the rhythms are different.

Example 38: A principal theme employing a variation of figure $y$ (3rd Movt. mm 15-22)

A similar oscillation occurs in Example 39. In this theme from the fourth movement, the juxtaposition of the major and minor seventh, separated by only one beat, is reiterated three times in measures 160, 161, and 162. The two eighth notes on $G^b$ in measure 162 form a slight rhythmic transformation of the quarter note seen on beat four in measures 160-161. The basic rhythmic motive is $\n\n$.

Example 39: A countertheme using a variant of figure $y$ (4th Movt. mm 160-163)

Example 40 is a lyrical theme from the development section of the fourth movement. The minor seventh occupies the greater portion of measure 37 so that the major seventh before it is essentially an anacru-
sis. Since the half note $E^b$ occurs on beat two in a meter of $3/4$, this rhythmic placement causes the "blue note" to be syncopated. The same chromatic slide of $E^b$ to $E^b$ occurs in diminutive form as two eighth notes in measure 38. The reiteration of these two chromatic tones certainly helps to emphasize the blues effect.

Example 40: A developmental theme employing a variation of figure y (4th Movt. mm 37-40)

Part A and B of Example 41 show the juxtaposition of the major and minor sixth as another fluctuating "blue note." Part A is a countermotive that fills in the spatial gaps of the last four-measure phrase of the principal theme of the second movement. In measure 12, the minor sixth occurs as an eighth note on the very last beat and then descends a diminished octave to its major counterpart, which in comparison is held a lengthy four beats. By contrast, in Part B, the minor sixth is given a little more prominence in measure 32 by occurring on beat three. But, the major sixth, $B^h$, immediately before, "takes the stage" and holds the strongest metrical accent because of the syncopated motive (\(\frac{1}{5}\)). The "blue note" of the minor sixth is again stated on beat two in measure 33.

Example 41, Part A: A countermotive employing a variation of figure y (2nd Movt. mm 12-15)
Example 41, Part B: Developmental theme's utilization of variant y
(2nd Movt. mm 32-33)

A singular alternation of a perfect fifth and a diminished fifth
is seen in this next example. Because of its time value and its number
of repetitions, this diminished fifth figure is an important unit in
the seven measures below. The phrase begins on the perfect fifth, C₄, 
appearing as a quarter note on beat one of measure 61. Followed then
by two statements of the diminished fifth in measures 62 and 64, the
perfect fifth returns in measure 65, only to be rhythmically over-
shadowed by the reappearance of the diminished in measure 66.

Example 42: A singular use of a variation of y with the fifth scale
degree (4th Movt. mm 61-67)

An interesting and final example of a variation of figure y as a
juxtaposition of two chromatic notes on a horizontal plane is drawn
from the development section of the first movement. An immediate al-
ternation of the major and minor seventh is viewed in measure 78 of
this example. But, it is in the skipping eighth-note texture (measures
76-77 and 80-81), that a greater collection of adjacent inflected tones
is observed. The major and minor seventh, as one of the many "blue
notes" in this eight-measure period, occur on beats one and two of measures 76 and 80. A fluctuation of the third degree is seen in measure 77 with the C\textsuperscript{b} on the first beat and the C\textsuperscript{b} on the fourth beat. And, in measures 80-81, there is an alternation of the major and minor sixth over the bar line. F\textsuperscript{b} occurs on the fourth beat of measure 80 as the minor sixth and F\textsuperscript{b} similarly occurs on the fourth of measure 81 as the major scale degree.

Example 43: The developmental theme containing an abundance of variant y's (1st Movt. mm 74-81)

A third part of this section on the analysis of figure y investigates a variation of figure y in which the juxtaposition between two chromatic tones is on a vertical plane. In this plane, the melody or countermelody contains one chromatic tone and the harmonic accompaniment contains the other.

Example 44 contains a short chordal countermotive that "comments" during the very first measure of the blues theme in the first movement. (See Example 2, Part B). The melody in this countermotive begins with C\textsuperscript{b} and resolves to A\textsuperscript{b} on the last sixteenth-note beat. Within the chord, C\textsuperscript{b}, a diminished octave below, is rhythmically stated in counterpoint with the C\textsuperscript{b}. Both of these tones are the major and minor third of the tonic seventh chord on A\textsuperscript{b}. A similar juxtaposition of
Ch's and Cb's is used extensively in the orchestral texture of the first movement, especially in the first two twelve-measure statements of the blues theme. This technique results in the simultaneous sounding of A♭ Major and A♭ Minor.

Example 44: A countermotive utilizing a "vertical" variant of figure y (1st Movt. mm 7)

Taken from the same movement, the following example concerns the subordinate theme in G Major. Measure 50 in Example 45 demonstrates a chromatic alternation between the perfect and diminished fifth. On beat three of the measure, the harmony spells a major ninth chord on E. The F♯ in this chord forms a sharp dissonance with the repeated B♭ in the melody. A similar technique is observed in the succeeding chord. The C♯ in the melody is dissonant against the C♭ in the underlying major ninth chord. This effect of dissonance is further intensified because of the use of a fermata. In addition, a simultaneous

Example 45: Use of variant y in the subordinate theme (1st Movt. mm 50-52)

sounding of the major and minor is heard in measure 57. The dominant seventh chord on D implies the major third, F♯, which is "dissonant"
against the F on the last quarter beat of the measure.

The first four-measure phrase of the principal theme of the second movement is seen in Example 46. Here, dissonances occur on the strongest beats of the measure. In measure 8, a tonic seventh chord contains an A₄ that is dissonant against the A₇ in the melody. The rhythmic syncopation (r) on beat one deemphasizes and takes away from the melodic appearance of this minor tone. A dissonance recurs on the last beat of the measure. The chromatic passing tone, F♯, in the bass, clashes with the "climbing" F♯ in the melody. On beat one of measure 9, the E♭ in the melody is played against the E♯ in the accompaniment. The syncopated figure, on the first beat, yet provides greater prominence. This same dominant seventh chord is repeated in the beginning of the next measure.

Example 46: Use of variant figure y by the principal theme (2nd Movt. mm 7-10)

Example 47 is taken from the development of the third movement. A four-note figure and two quarter rests in the bass are a rhythmic counterpoint to the two quarter notes and a half note in the melody. The first beat in measure 50 yields the first dissonance between the thirds (E♭ and E♯) of this dominant seventh chord in the key of F Minor. This same dissonance recurs on beat four. In measure 51, the thirds of the tonic seventh chord provide another effect of simultane-
ous chromatic tones. The $A^\flat$ in the bass in the four-note figure, clashes with the climactic $A^b$ above.

Example 47. Vertical inflections in the development (3rd Movt. mm 50-51)

![Musical staff with notes and symbols]

Finally, a vertical variant of figure $y$ originates from a transitional phrase of the fourth movement, preceding the principal theme's recapitulation. Measure 94 in Example 48 spells a minor dominant ninth chord in F Minor, ($C \ E^b \ G \ B^b \ D^b$), in which the $F^b$ in the bass is enharmonic to $E^\natural$ and the fifth of the chord is omitted. The $C^b$ in the melody on beat one is dissonant against the fundamental dominant tone of $C^\natural$ in the bass. But, it soon resolves to its seventh, $B^b$, on beat two. A borrowed chord from the relative key of $A$ Major is then seen in measure 95. This chord structure is a tonic minor ninth chord. The $C^b$ on the first beat of this measure is not a supposed dissonance a-

Example 48: A transitional theme's use of the vertical variation of figure $y$ (4th Movt. mm 94-96)

![Musical staff with notes and symbols]

gainst the $C^\natural$ in the harmony, but is part of the chord. This alterna-
tion of the $V^9$ in the minor key to the $I^9$ in the major key is stated four times in this eight-measure section and forms an interesting harmonic sequence; heading to the tonic C$\#$ minor triad of the principal theme that follows.

A final section of this analysis concentrates on figure y in its use of interval expansion. This variant figure commences with the usual half-step inflection, but this half-step is immediately followed by a larger interval exceeding the second. The "new" interval proceeds in the opposite direction. Example 49, Part A is a four-measure phrase taken from the development section of the second movement. The new variation of figure y, an "escape-tone" figure, is found in measure 43 as the melodic unit C - D$^b$ - B$^b$. The interval of expansion is a minor third. D$^b$ in this three-note figure is the climax of this developmental theme. A similar illustration ensues in Part B. Here, the

Example 49, Part A: An "escape-tone" variant of y in the development (2nd Movt. mm 42-45)

"escape-tone" figure is utilized primarily as an anacrusis to measures 54 and 55, in which the last note of the three-note figure falls on beat one. In the first figure, the expanded interval is a fourth and in the second figure, it is a fifth. These two figures allow for a rapid descent from C$^3$ to A$^1$, in the span of only five beats.

Example 49, Part B: Another use of the "escape-tone" figure (3rd Movt. mm 53-55)
Example 50, Part A demonstrates a singular occurrence of this variation of figure y involving the expanded octave in measure 79 below. These four measures are from a transitional section in the fourth movement. Part B shows the use of the expanded sixth. This item is an imitation of the last measure of the principal theme of the second movement. (See Example 35, Part A). The C⁷ in this three-note figure is the low climax of this short two-measure phrase.

Example 50, Part A: A singular occurrence of the "escape-tone" figure employing the expanded octave (4th Movt. mm 77-79)

Example 50, Part B: An imitative two-measure phrase employing a variant of figure y (2nd Movt. mm 23-24)

Analysis of FIGURE Z

Figure z is a three-note figure which utilizes the melodic sequence of a major second immediately followed by a minor third. (See Example 14). In the blues theme, this melodic sequence is Db - Cb - Ab.

Figure z is used extensively throughout the symphony's texture, and the
majority of the time, appears in association with its retrograde and its inversion. Other forms of figure z frequently occur also. In contrast to the other figures w, x, and y, figure z rarely employs the technique of interval expansion in its "development." A reason for this procedure might be that since this melodic figure is found in most Negro Spirituals, the composer may have wished to retain those peculiar or inherent qualities "found" in figure z that suggests the Negro Spiritual. In addition, the blues has some of its origins in the sorrow songs among the body of spirituals, and the composer also may have wished to draw upon this historical relationship by keeping figure z "intact and unadorned" within this idiomatic blues symphony. Subsequently, figure z is labelled the "spiritual" figure.

The first example in this section concerning figure z is taken from the subordinate theme of the second movement. Figure z occurs in measure 46 of the example below. The three-note unit on the first beat follows the melodic sequence of A - G - E. An inversion of figure z ensues in measure 48, commencing on G, in this subtle melodic change. Here, the interval of the third initiates the descending figure. A retrograde of the "spiritual" figure is then seen in measure 49 beginning on the second half of beat three with the sequence D - E - G. Finally, in measure 50, an ornamented version of the retrograde-inversion is realized. The basic melodic outline is G - B - C. The


ornamenting triplet on beat two precedes a reiterated minor third on beat three, followed by a major second. Consequently, within this eight-measure section, three forms of figure z are presented: the inversion, the retrograde, and the retrograde-inversion.

Example 51: The subordinate theme utilizing figure z in varied forms (1st Movt. mm 45-52)

Example 52 draws from the principal theme in the development section of the second movement. The original "spiritual" figure is the triplet figure on beat one of measure 37. This identical melodic unit is repeated an octave below in measure 39. Figure z, as the retrograde-inversion, appears in measure 38 on beat two in the syncopated unit (\( \text{\textcopyright} \)).

Example 52: The use of figure z in the developmental theme (2nd Movt. mm 36-39)

A literal chain of "spiritual" figures is observed below. A triplet on beat three of measure 82 initiates the chain with the notes F - Eb - C. A second triplet commences on the next tone below and spells Bb - Ab - F on beat one of measure 83. In this same measure, the minor third third of the inverted and augmented form encompasses
beats two and three and links to the tone $E^b$, which starts the final figure of $E^b - C - B^b$, in measure 84.

Example 53: A transitional phrase's use of figure z (4th Movt. mm 81-84)

![Music notation]

The principal theme of the fourth movement utilizes figure z as extensively as figure w. In the second measure of this theme in minor, the retrograde-inversion of figure z is the total melody of this measure. Again the retrograde-inversion is realized in measures 3 and 4 in which the figure extends across the bar line. Its melodic unit is $G^# - B - C^#$. The combination of these two figures in measures 2-4 spans the interval of an octave ($C^# - E - F^# - G^# - B - C^#$). The original three-note figure of a major second-minor third is stated immediately succeeding the melodic climax on $G^#$ in measure 5. This figure in measure 6 starts the downward contour to b. Now an inversion of figure z extends over three measures in which the strings outline by syncopation the melodic sequence of $B - G^# - F^#$. In measure 10, the low climax of B initiates the retrograde form that crosses the bar line of measures 10 and 11, terminating on E.

Example 54: The principal theme's use of various forms of figure z as building blocks of the melody (4th Movt. mm 1-12)
A "gapped" spiritual figure is seen in the principal theme of the third movement in measures 12 and 13, in which rests separate the two tones of the minor third in this inverted form of figure z. Example 45 is a unique example in this section concerning figure z. This inverted form is repeated a major second lower in a strict eighth-note rhythm starting starting on $A^b$ in measure 13, immediately followed by its retrograde back to $A^b$.

Example 55: The principal theme employing a variation of figure z (3rd Movt. mm 11-14)

In the fourth movement, figure z, in retrograde, is the basic melodic unit of this wavy ascending violin run that aurally approximates a "yelp" because of the fast tempo (Vivace $I. = 112$) and high tessitura. In measure 156 of Example 46 below, the unit $B^b - C - E^b$ begins the run, and a fifth higher later, $F - G - B^b$ is heard. These two figures are reiterated in the following measure: the second figure an octave higher and the first figure, two octaves higher.
Example 56: A violin run employing the retrograde of figure z (4th Movt. mm 156-158)

The final example concerning figure z is taken from the coda of the fourth movement. The original "spiritual" figure is stated eight times in unison by the strings in this phrase of only four measures. Figure z not only gains greater thematic significance because of this abundant repetition but the "spiritual" figure was chosen to close the Afro-American Symphony.

Example 57: The closing theme employing figure z (4th Movt. mm 216-219)
CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE MELODIC STRUCTURE OF THE SYMPHONY

This chapter discusses three general compositional techniques that are utilized in the Afro-American Symphony. These three devices include: (1) repetition, (2) rhythmic and melodic variety, and (3) linear chromaticism, and play a critical role in the overall effectiveness of melody in the symphony and help to reinforce the more conspicuous characteristics of the blues idiom. The present chapter also pertains to the presentation of thematic material in this work and how this presentation complements the appearances of the blues motive and the development of its material.

Repetition

Repetition is an important part of the organization of this symphony. The element of repetition is handled in a variety of ways and is realized on all compositional levels, from the smallest motive to the larger scheme of whole movements. The function of repetition as related to the formal characteristics of movements was discussed in Chapter I.

Repetition in the symphony is of two basic types: literal and sequential. Literal repetition generally encompasses the shorter motives and figures while sequential repetition entails longer phrases of the melody. Often in this sequential treatment, the composer changes
only the smallest details in the repetition of the phrase.

Repetition within the symphony functions solely for emphasis, otherwise the composer sees its use as worthless. Because the Afro-American Symphony is geared to both the trained and untrained listener, the emphasis on repetition has a practical value. It allows this work to be more easily comprehended, even on initial hearing. This element of repetition keeps the symphony "simple and intelligible," and allows the form or plan that underlies the work to be readily detectable by the listener.

Repetition has been noted in regard to the blues theme. In summary, this repetition involves: the rhythm of each four-measure phrase of the theme being made identical, an immediate restatement of the complete twelve-bar blues, and a recapitulation of the blues theme in which the rhythm of the theme itself is altered into a sequence of repeated rhythmic figures.

On the smallest scale, Dr. Still repeats a single note in the short rhythmic figure below. This compositional technique is extensively used in the two-note development of figure w taken from the blues theme. The following example demonstrates this device in a singular three-note figure taken from the second movement, in which a "blue note," the flatted seventh, is reiterated.

Example 58: A "commenting" motive showing repetition of a "blue note"
(2nd Movt. mm 18-19)

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Another type of repetition involves a constant alternation between two tones that comprise a minor third, usually in descending motion. This predilection for the descending minor third, that is utilized extensively in the symphony, may be viewed as stemming from the original blues theme that contains this interval at the end of its three phrases. Part A of Example 59 is a short transitional phrase preceding the recapitulation of the subordinate theme in the first movement. This phrase contains an alternation of the minor third, $C^b$ to $E^b$. After an involved development section of the principal theme of this same movement, the minor third figure, as a bass clarinet solo accompanied only by the harp, reestablishes a mood of calm for the reappearance of the "spiritual" subordinate theme. Part B of this Example 59, Part A: A solo figure repeating the minor third (1st Movt. mm 101-103)

The transitional theme below immediately comes before the recapitulation of the principal theme. The repetition involves a reiteration of the third and diminished fifth degrees of the scale of this melody in F Minor. In measure 92, the minor third ($C^b - A^b$) is stated, but is separated by the note $B^b$. Then in measure 93, the third is seen on beats one and
two, and is followed by a literal repeat of measure 92 in the next measure. The minor third takes a new rhythmic character for three measures involving a quarter-half note pattern which is augmented into two dotted half notes in measures 98-99.

Example 59, Part B: A transitional theme utilizing a descending minor third figure (4th Movt. mm 92-99)

Example 60 employs the repetition of a diminished triad. The melodic unit \(F - A^b - C^b\) is stated three times in this seven-measure phrase. Each occurrence of this figure extends over the bar line in measures 61-62, 62-63, and 64-65. The "blue note," the fifth of the scale, is rhythmically diminished in each successive appearance of the triadic figure, from a dotted half to a half and then to an eighth note. This phrase presents a skillful treatment of repeated material as an intergal part of the phrase structure.

Example 60: A developmental theme using a repeated triad figure (4th Movt. mm 61-66)

In the following series of examples, W. G. Still makes use of a
compositional device in which he duplicates succinct rhythmic groups. Part A of Example 61 concerns the reiteration of the eighth-dotted quarter note figure (See measure 92 below). After a climax on $g^2\frac{3}{4}$ a few measures prior, the passage in the example is a descending melodic line by leaps, in which a melodic idea is presented in measures 93-94, immediately followed by its sequence in measures 95-96. In this iambic rhythmic chain, the eighth notes are anacruses to the accentuated dotted quarter struck on beats one and three. The countermotive to this transitional phrase is built on the figure of an eighth note and a quarter note. The combination of these two lines in performance is yet another example of the blues call-and-response practice. Part B of the example presents the countermotive.

Example 61, Part A: A transitional theme built on one figure (1st Movt. mm 92-96)

Example 61, Part B: A accompanying theme also built on one rhythmic figure (1st Movt. mm 92-96)

The rhythmic idea, shown in Example 62, is a syncopated one. Its first eighth note acts as an upbeat to the trochaic figure that follows
on the second half of the measure. This reiterated figure (\( \frac{\text{\textbullet}}{\text{\textbullet}} \))
is part of a transitional phrase that helps to introduce the key of F Minor for the statement of the coda in the fourth movement.

Example 62: A transitional phrase employing a repeated syncopated figure (4th Movt. mm 182-189)

\[\text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \]

Frequently, the composer uses rhythmic groups as "islands" surrounded by rests in his repetition scheme. These "islands" usually contain all even notes and start on the weak portions of the measure. The finest examples illustrating this technique are present in the fourth movement. Part A of Example 63 shows an eight-measure period in which a three-note chromatic slide is employed. This particular figure is an important thematic motive in the latter part of this movement. In measures 133-136, a four-measure is presented and is followed by its sequence, in the respective modulatory keys of A\(_b\) Major and E Major. Part B demonstrates a single two-note figure that is stated on

Example 63, Part A: A rhythmic "island" employed in an eight-measure period (4th Movt. mm 133-140)

\[\text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \]

\[\text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \quad \text{\textbullet} \]
the weakest portion of the measure, the sixth beat. This figure is accompanied in the orchestra by another figure which consists of an eighth note, an eighth rest, a quarter note, and an eighth note (\(\frac{\text{1}}{4} \ \text{R} \ \frac{\text{1}}{8} \ \frac{\text{1}}{4}\)). This counterpoint, played by the horns, commences on beat two. In addition, the drums have their distinctive ostinato rhythm of two eighth notes on the first two beats of every measure, a figure identical to the one in the example. The combination of all of these rhythmic "islands" produces a complex and fascinating sequence of cross-rhythms.

Example 63, Part B: Another rhythmic "island" (4th Movt. mm 150-157)

\[\text{Diagram of Example 63, Part B}\\
\]

The last two examples in this section of the chapter illustrate a procedure that was used in association with the blues theme; the repetition of whole phrases. This technique has an obvious unity. Below, a three-measure segment is the repeated element. Taken from measures 65-67 of a developmental theme in the fourth movement, this segment starts on the C\(^4\) in measure 65 and terminates with the half note, F, in measure 67. This lyrical segment is literally repeated twenty-one measures later as seen in Part B of Example 64.

Example 64, Part A: Developmental theme showing the original three-measure segment (4th Movt. mm 62-67)
Example 64, Part B: Recurrence of the three-measure segment (4th Movt. mm 90-93)

Example 65 presents the principal theme of the fourth movement. The following four-measure phrase is presented twice during the course of the theme's complete statement. Its first occurrence is seen near the middle of the twenty-eight measure theme. The phrase is repeated as the last four measures of the theme, almost functioning as a little "codetta," in measures 25-28.

Example 65: A four-measure phrase employed twice in the principal theme (4th Movt. 13-16, 25-28)

Rhythmic and Melodic Variety

This section discusses the importance of variety as a compositional technique in sustaining musical interest within the symphony. The importance of repetition was seen in the previous section, but a practical "counterbalance" to the use of repetition is needed; hence, the employment of rhythmic and melodic variety. Both devices are comple-
mentary and essential to the whole musical structure.

The contrast of rhythm and melody often overlaps, so that important rhythmic and melodic transformations take place in the same phrase or subphrase. The majority of melodies in the Afro-American Symphony are classic eight-measure periods and it is within the statement of the second four-measure phrase that the greatest amount of contrast is observed; so that the resulting form is (a) and (a'). The first example illustrating the use of contrast is seen in the first and second four-measure phrases of the original blues theme. Only two essential changes are evident: (1) the newly contracted interval of a fourth in measure 11 as opposed to the starting descending interval of a perfect fifth in measure 7, and (2) the effective E anticipation in measure 12 as opposed to the D in measure 8. (See Example 1). These changes are quite simple but are utilized with substantial effectiveness.

Example 66 is taken from the subordinate theme of the first movement. In the first four-measure phrase, the most subtle change is seen.

Example 66: Subordinate theme showing elements of contrast (1st Movt. mm 45-52)

Figure 2 on beat one of measure 46 transforms into its inversion on the corresponding beat of measure 48. These two figures are enclosed in broken brackets. It is interesting that measure 49 is basically the inversion of measure 45. The same "neighboring-tone" outline (in brac-
is seen in measures 45-46 (B - A - B - A) and in measure 49 (D - E - D - E). The last part of the neighboring-tone figure in measure 49, G, belongs to the melodic unit of G - B\textsubscript{b} - C in measure 50. Finally, measures 51-52 show a new type of rhythmic and melodic development. The figure (\(\displaystyle \frac{?}{\text{,}}\) ) on beats one and three of measure 51 and beat one of measure 52, not only derives from the rhythmic figure (\(\displaystyle \frac{?}{\text{,}}\) ) taken from measure 45, but its melody outlines a basic scale figure (B\textsubscript{b} - F - G) that is ornamented with the melodic pickups, D, B\textsuperscript{b}, and A. This particular melodic unit in orchestral context is highly effective, and is so different from the previous six measures that the overall form in relation to degree of contrast in this eight-measure section is a a' a'' b.

In the principal theme of the second movement (Example 67), variety is achieved through a difference in the rising melodic contour of the first four-measure phrase and the falling melodic contour of the second four-measure phrase. This resulting juxtaposition of melodic "spheres" is musically effective against the chordal accompaniment in the strings. In measures 7-10, the melody slowly climbs to its first climax on G, on the fourth beat of measure 9. As the melody again commences on A\textsuperscript{b} in measure 11, a melodic descent culminates on the

Example 67: The principal theme utilizing mirror contours (2nd Movt. mm 7-14)
second climax of C⁷ on the second eighth beat of measure 13. As a result, the relatively static rhythm between measures 12 and 13, filled in by a "commenting" counterpoint, contrasts with the more active rhythmic motion of the first four-measure phrase.

Example 68 possibly contains the most outstanding illustration of thematic variety. Part A below is the first eight-measure period of the principal theme of the third movement and Part B is the second eight-measure period. In Part A, the more significant transformations can be seen by the comparison of measures 9-10 and measures 13-14. In measure 9, the rhythmic figure (\( \text{\textcopyright} \)), as shown in brackets, is changed to a "gapped" rhythmic figure (\( \text{\textcopyright} \)) in measure 13. Both of these figures collectively stand in contrast to the basic unifying figure of \( \text{\textcopyright} \), as shown in broken brackets. In regard to melody, the contour of the five-note unit in measure 9, which extends over the bar line, is a zig-zag figure (C - A⁷ - B⁷ - G - A⁷). The comparable place in measures 13-14 contains a five-note figure that has a curving contour. Both of these figures are shown in broken parentheses. In

Example 68, Part A: Eight-measure period illustrating thematic variety (3rd Mvmt. mm 7-14)

Part B, rhythmic alteration plays the greater contrasting role. The rhythm of the first and second four-measure phrases is identical with the exception of measures 16 and 19. In measure 16, the dotted half
note on E is static in motion compared to its immediate surroundings. This static motion is in itself a type of contrast. Measure 19 then substitutes a sequence of syncopated figures (\( \frac{7}{4} \), \( \frac{3}{4} \)) for the dotted half note. This substituting figure of short-long adds great rhythmic interest, and is seen in brackets. Measure 18 presents a melodic change that is a "shout" in the blues idiom. The raising of A an octave on the third beat of the measure, which is the "shout," allows for the lengthy melodic descent in measures 18-19, as shown in broken parenthesis. This melodic descent outlines the tonic seventh chord.

Example 68, Part B: Second eight-measure period demonstrating rhythmic variety (3rd Movt. mm 15-21)

The development of this same principal theme exhibits a unique fluctuation of rhythmic "islands" that were discussed in the previous section. In Example 69 below, the number sequence of each eighth-note grouping is 4, 5, 4, 3, and 3. Each of these figures extends over the bar line, except for the first three-note figure in measure 48.

Example 69: Development theme showing rhythmic "islands" for contrast (3rd Movt. mm 46-49)
The principal theme of the third movement, in its recapitulation, exposes a tremendous amount of thematic transformation in comparison to the theme's first utterance. In measure 70, in Part A of Example 70, the same melodic unit of $D^b - E^b$ as seen in measure 9 of Example 68, Part A, is followed by a new melodic sequence of a reiterated minor third ($A^b - C^b$) on the third and fourth beats of the measure. This melodic outline substitutes for the earlier figure of broken descending thirds. The melodic contour of the basic five-note figure in measure 74 curves "over" (\(\searrow\)) as opposed to the melodic contour of the five-note figure in measure 13 in Example 68, Part A, which curves "under" (\(\nearrow\)).

Example 70, Part A: Recapitulation showing skillful thematic development (3rd Movt. mm 68-75)

However, the most outstanding feature of the second four-measure phrase in the example immediately above is its resemblance to the original blues theme. The blues outline in its second four-measure phrase is $A^b - D^b - E^b - C^b - A^b$. The melodic outline in this recapitulated theme is $A^b - D^b - E^b - C^b - A^b$. Only the $D^b$ in the latter outline differs with the $D^b$ in the former outline. Part B of Example 70 presents the two outlines together. The rhythmic figure (\(\text{\textbullet} \)) in measure 73-74, in union with the high violin range (\(a^3\)), portrays another fine example of the blues "shout."
Example 70, Part B: Comparison of the melodic outlines of the recapitulated theme and the original blues theme (3rd Movt. mm 74-75 and 1st Movt. mm 12-13)

The principal theme of the fourth movement presents an interesting performance technique for the sake of variety. During the first five measures in the example below, the violins play the melody "con risoluzione" and are accompanied by the organ-like brass choir and clarinets. But, in measures 7-9, the blues procedure of call-and-response is initiated. The accompaniment now assumes the dominant role and accentuates the downbeats of the measures, while the solo violins "comment" on the second beats, forming an alternation between choir (instrumental ensemble) and strings (performer). Example 71 demonstrates this blues performance practice.

Example 71: The use of blues call-and-response in the principal theme (4th Movt. mm 2-9)

A final example of the technique of rhythmic and melodic contrast utilized to sustain musical interest, is seen in the coda of the fourth
movement, in which a strict eighth-note rhythm (\(\frac{1}{4} \frac{1}{4} \frac{3}{4} \frac{1}{4}\)) is alternated with its variant form (\(\frac{3}{4} \frac{1}{4}\)) until the termination of the symphony. Both rhythmic groups are "islands" that the composer uses extensively as one type of the many compositional devices throughout the symphony. Example 72 gives only a portion of the twenty-six measure coda.

Example 72: Rhythmic variety as seen in the coda (4th Movt. mm 199-204)

\[\text{Chromaticism}\]

Chromaticism as a stylistic technique, does not create the idiom of the blues but helps to accentuate and sustain the blues effect within this symphony by its constant "suggestion of inflected tones." Chromaticism is utilized from the smallest figures to large transitional sections and is usually found in association with a rhythmic idea that is repeated extensively, or in association with with primary themes as their countermotives. These chromatic occurrences are most prevalent in the slower sections of movements where the help-step inflections are more pronounced.

The first example in this section is taken from a transitional theme preceding the subordinate theme of the first movement. The chromatic descent in the harmony below, accompanying aocket-like transition above it, is a progression of parallel chords that contain
a minor seventh and diminished fifth, with the third omitted.

Example 73: Parallel chromatic harmony in a transitional section (1st Movt. mm 41-44)

A similar example of parallel dissonances is seen in the harmonic accompaniment to the subordinate theme in Example 74. These chords form a succession of parallel diminished fifths, which finally resolves to the tonic tones, G and B in measure 52. These dissonances are further intensified because of a ritardation in these measures.

Example 74: Parallel chromatic harmony in the subordinate theme (1st Movt. mm 50-52)

Example 75 is taken from the second movement. The short chromatic sequence below, in almost strict quarter-note rhythm, is a countermotive to the subordinate theme, itself based on the "chromatic-turn" figure (y). The extent of this chromatic slide is only a descending minor third, again the last interval of the blues motive.

Example 75: A chromatic accompanying motive to the subordinate theme (2nd Movt. mm 28-31)
A linking bass progression, in Example 76, is the foundation for part b of the shortened blues theme in the second movement. It functions as a chromatic bridge connecting the fundamental tone of the tonic chord (F) to the fundamental tone of the dominant chord (C) in measures 52-53. (See Example 7).

Example 76: A chromatic bridge linking the tonic and dominant chords in the shortened eight-bar blues (2nd Movt. mm 52-55)

The next to the last example is a transitional theme found in the fourth movement. It is built on the rhythmic figure (\[\text{\rotatebox{90}{\text{\textit{\textdaggerhead{\textdaggerhead{}ypsy}}}}\text{\rotatebox{-90}{\textit{\textdaggerhead{}ypsy}}}}\]). This descent extending the octave is one of the finer examples employing linear chromaticism.

Example 77: A descending chromatic transitional theme built on one rhythmic figure (4th Movt. mm 129-134)

The final example, Example 78, dealing with chromaticism as a compositional device, is taken from the first movement. It is a glissando to the developmental theme. The composer uses the glissando effect extensively throughout the symphony as one of the vocal idiosyncrasies of the blues idiom.
Example 78: A glissando figure acting as an anacrusis to the developmental theme (1st Movt. mm 73-74)
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Afro-American Symphony, written by the Negro composer, William Grant Still, is a lyrical composition that places primary emphasis on melodic line. Generally, melody is significant for the composer because of the early influence of opera. This influence caused him to adopt a lyrical or melodic style of writing. As a result, melody is opined by him as "the most important musical element." In the symphony, Dr. Still uses melody as a major basis of the work, specifically a melody in the blues idiom.

The main purpose for employing the blues idiom in the Afro-American Symphony grew out of a desire the composer had to "elevate" and synthesize a common folk idiom within the classical context of a symphony. He employs the blues idiom in two ways: first, the blues theme is varied or altered through rhythmic transformations. These variations or "guises" of the blues theme reoccur throughout the work and act as an important unifying factor, and second; small melodic figures from the blues theme are used as the building blocks for the construction of all the melodies in the symphony. This technique of thematic "development" is the most important unifying procedure in the Afro-American Symphony.

The blues theme is initially presented in the first movement as a typical twelve-bar blues form. It is a three-part structure which prominent characteristics include: the utilization of the blues practice of "call-and-response," the employment of identical rhythm in each of its four-measure phrases, the adherence to the common blues harmonic
pattern, the presence of "blue notes" in the melody, and the construc-
of the theme as an effective and well-proportioned melody. Harmony and
form are directly affected by the blues idiom, specifically, its har-
monic scheme and performance procedure.

In utilizing these various blues elements, W. G. Still demonstrates
his skill and facility for thematic transformation. His usual procedure
is to change only one aspect of a repeated phrase just enough for
melodic and rhythmic interest to be maintained, always carefully
balancing the musical devices of repetition and contrast. The result-
ing transformations are usually quite small and extremely subtle, but
are used with great effect in perpetuating and augmenting the blues
idiom. The composer, in summary, operates with the view that even the
smallest details of composition contribute to the effectiveness of the
whole. This view is demonstrated and best seen in the section, "Rhyth-
mic and Melodic Variety."

The scope of this study is limited to a comprehensive analysis
of the melodic structure of the Afro-American Symphony, and melodic
techniques utilized by the composer have been demonstrated for this
particular work. Because Dr. Still's compositional skills are exten-
sive and his use of different idioms is dependent upon the desired
musical effect, this symphony must be viewed as only a small part of
the composer's output and is not truly representative of his total
powers of composition. However, the blues idiom has been used effec-
tively within this symphonic work.

Because of the various characteristics of this idiom and the
Negro idiom in general, certain limitations did confine the extent to
which this "blues" symphony developed. Dr. Still deliberately main-
tains simple melodic, harmonic, and formal patterns to achieve a certain
degree of simplicity and to "intensify in the music those qualities
which enable the hearers to recognize it as Negro music."30 Therefore,
the development of thematic does not follow entirely traditional lines.
Complex imitative and fugal treatments are ignored in favor of a simple
homophonic texture that allows the melody to always be prominent and
that keeps this symphony "simple and intelligible."

Other comprehensive studies that would reveal additional insight
into the compositional techniques of the composer employed by him
in the Afro-American Symphony might include the area of: (1) rhythm,
(2) orchestration, (3) vocal effects pertaining to the blues idiom,
and (4) tension-release cycle. Suggested topics for investigation are:
"A Comprehensive Analysis of the Rhythmic Structure of the . . . ,"
"An Historical Perspective of the Orchestral Techniques as Related to
New Jazz Innovations in the . . .," "The Employment of Special Blues
Vocal Effects in the . . .," and "A Comprehensive Analysis of the
Tension-Release Cycle in the . . . ."

It is the hope of the writer that a further interest in the works
of William Grant Still has been stimulated by this study and that the
composer's desire to "elevate a lowly expression to the highest musical
level" has been demonstrated.

"Soli Deo Gloria"
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


