

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Mennin Biography and Overview of his Symphonies

Peter Mennin was born 17 May 1923 in Erie, Pennsylvania to parents Attilio and Amelia Mennini.⁴⁵ He later Americanized his name to Mennin to help differentiate himself from his older brother, Louis, who also composed. By taking early solfeggio and piano lessons with the local musician, Tito Spantani, he reportedly learned to read music before being able to read or write.⁴⁶ He also later realized he had perfect pitch.

Mennin composed his first piano piece before age seven⁴⁷ and attempted a symphony at age eleven.⁴⁸ Other early compositions include more piano pieces and a number of songs, some of which were set to the texts of Emily Dickinson.⁴⁹ Of his early musical influences, Mennin states:

When I was very young, it was Verdi... The bulk of my lessons were drawn from Verdi operas. Then for a while I had had enough of Verdi, too much. Later, when I was older, I fell in love with Verdi all over again, and for good. But while I was a student Beethoven was certainly one of the dominant influences, not only for the usual good reasons—because the music was great, because it moved me emotionally—but because I could learn so much from Beethoven.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Holland, "Peter Mennin, Juilliard President and Prolific Composer, Dies at 60."

⁴⁶ David Ewen, *American Composers a Biographical Dictionary* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 449.

⁴⁷ Carrington, "'for the Sake of Art': A Talk with Peter Mennin.," 40.

⁴⁸ "Current Biography," ed. Charles Moritz (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1964), 289.

⁴⁹ Carrington, "'for the Sake of Art': A Talk with Peter Mennin.," 40.

⁵⁰ Peter Mennin, as quoted in Soria, "Artist Life," MA-6.

After high school, Mennin attended the Oberlin Conservatory for two years in 1940, studying with Normand Lockwood. Though Mennin claims to have learned much from Lockwood, overall, he said they “did not hit it off too well.”⁵¹ During this time, he completed the following works, all of which he later withdrew from publication for unknown reasons: *Alleluia* for Mixed Chorus (1941), *Four Songs* for Soprano and Piano on poems of Emily Dickinson (1941), Sonata for Organ (1941), String Quartet No. 1 (1941), and Symphony No. 1 (1941).

Symphony No. 1

In 1941, Mennin—only eighteen years old—scored his First Symphony for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, three other percussionists, and standard string parts.⁵² This fairly traditional instrumentation would become, with minimal adjustments, the normal configuration for all his symphonies. According to the composer, the duration of Symphony No. 1 is forty-five minutes⁵³ and, as he said later in *Time* magazine, “too damn long.”⁵⁴ Consequently, he withdrew this symphony from publication, so no score, recordings, or reviews are available.

Mennin left Oberlin in 1942 when drafted into the U.S. Army Air Force. He

⁵¹ Peter Mennin, as quoted in Carrington, ““for the Sake of Art”: A Talk with Peter Mennin,” 40.

⁵² The standard string section consists of violins I and II, violas, violoncellos, and contrabasses.

⁵³ Interestingly, his main publisher, Carl Fischer, still lists this work, and at a much longer timing of 53:00 (not 45:00) minutes. *Peter Mennin List of Works*, [Web Page] (Carl Fischer Music Publishing, 3 March 2003); available from <http://www.carlfischer.com/menninworks.html>.

⁵⁴ Peter Mennin, as quoted in “No. 4,” *Time*, 28 March 1949, 45.

worked for a year as a clerk at the officers' candidate school in Florida. After his honorable discharge as a Second Lieutenant in 1943, he entered the Eastman School of Music because of their distinct policy of playing student works: "I had a yen to hear my things."⁵⁵ Before his enrollment, he finally heard his Symphony No. 1 in a Rochester, N.Y. performance conducted by Howard Hanson.⁵⁶

I was able to get a disk [vinyl record], take it home, study the sections I liked and didn't like, and thereby improve my own craft. To me, that was the biggest help of all.⁵⁷

Mennin received all three of his college degrees at Eastman, and amazingly completed them in only four years total— a bachelor of music and a master of music degree in 1945 and a Ph. D. in 1947. While there, Mennin studied composition with Bernard Rogers and Howard Hanson, the former of which offered him a position as his assistant instructor in orchestration. Of the latter, Mennin notes:

Hanson's music was very different from mine, and he never expressed any particular liking for my music, but at the same time he was a very big help to me...I've learned from a number of people, I think, in spite of whether I've liked or disliked them. As a matter of fact, I think you do not learn properly from a teacher whose music you have enormous admiration for.⁵⁸

By the time he graduated from Eastman, Mennin had completed the following works, two of which were the result of commissions: Concertino for Flute, Strings, and Percussion (1944), *Folk Overture* (1945), Fantasia for String Orchestra (1947, for the League of Composers for its 25th Anniversary), Sinfonia for Chamber Orchestra (1946, for NBC Station WHAM, Rochester, N.Y.), and Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3 (1944 and

⁵⁵ Peter Mennin, as quoted in Carrington, "'for the Sake of Art': A Talk with Peter Mennin," 40.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

1946).

Symphony No. 2

Symphony No. 2 was Mennin's master's thesis, though he provided no written analysis of it. The only difference in scoring from his First Symphony is in a third flute part that doubles the piccolo, and in the omission of the bass clarinet. According to the publisher, its duration is thirty-one minutes, which is shorter than his previous symphony, but longer than all subsequent ones. Since this was also a student work, no recordings or reviews are available, though the score is available from Mennin's main publisher, Carl Fischer Music, and from the Sibley Library of the Eastman School of Music.

Interestingly, this score still bears his original surname, Mennini.⁵⁹

The Second Symphony is in three movements: Allegro deciso (♩=132); Andante moderato (♩=86-96); and Allegro vigoroso (♩=132-136). This three-movement, fast-slow-fast structure is typical of all his later symphonies except for his Seventh and Eighth. The whole work is mostly in common time: of the first movement's 310 measures, all but 6 are; of the second movement's 165 measures, all but 29 are; and of the third movement's 317 measures, all but 2 are.

Mennin treats the main sections of the orchestra (woodwinds, brasses, strings, and percussion) as groups. Usually, each section performs different material, but occasionally, in specific places of emphasis, passages may be performed tutti (see Ex. 1).

⁵⁹ Peter Mennini, "Second Symphony" (M.M. Score, University of Rochester, 1945).

The image displays a page from a musical score, specifically measures 283-285 of the first movement of Symphony No. 2. The score is written for a full orchestra, with parts for Flute, Piccolo, Oboe, English Horn, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The music is in 4/4 time. The passage is marked 'tutti' and features strong dynamics, including 'f' (forte) and 'ff' (fortissimo). The strings play a driving, rhythmic pattern, while the winds enter with melodic lines and complex figures, including slurs and sixteenth notes. The score is written in a traditional, clear notation style.

Ex. 1. A tutti passage in the winds and strings. Symphony No. 2, Movement I, mm. 283-285.

The strings are the predominant force of this work, mostly playing throughout, and the brasses provide punctuation and an occasional melody. Mennin uses percussion sparsely, mainly for punctuation and for the one unaccompanied solo passage in the work (timpani, second movement: mm. 114-118). The score is without key signature, as are all his symphonies, and the notation of this work is traditional. Mennin uses chromatic harmony but often with modal and tonal centers. He foreshadows his technique of overlapping

modal ostinato, which will be used to a larger extent in most of his other symphonies (see Ex. 2).

The image displays a musical score for five string instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The music is written in C Dorian mode and features overlapping string ostinatos. The Violin I and II parts play a continuous eighth-note pattern. The Viola part plays a continuous eighth-note pattern. The Violoncello part plays a continuous eighth-note pattern. The Contrabass part plays a continuous eighth-note pattern. The score is marked with a strong 'ff' (fortissimo) dynamic. The time signature is 3/4.

Ex. 2. Overlapping string ostinatos in C Dorian. Symphony No. 2, Movement III, mm. 291-293.

On 27 March 1945, Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic performed the Second in Washington, D.C. That same year, one movement won the first Gershwin Memorial award and the whole symphony won the Bearns Prize in Composition from Columbia University. Despite all the success, though, Mennin still dismisses the work: “Let’s just forget about the *Second*.”⁶⁰

In 1946, Mennin studied conducting with Serge Koussevitzky at Tanglewood and continued to gain recognition for his compositions. He received an American Academy

⁶⁰ Peter Mennin, as quoted in "No. 4," 45.

of Arts and Letters award and his *Folk Overture* received performances by Hanson in Rochester, N.Y., Hans Kindler and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. (during multiple seasons), and the New York Philharmonic.

Symphony No. 3

Mennin completed his Third Symphony on his twenty-third birthday, 17 May 1946. It was his doctoral dissertation,⁶¹ which he completed about one year before he received his degree. Walter Hendl and the New York Philharmonic premiered the work 27 February 1947, even before his Eastman doctoral committee accepted it, “much to their annoyance.”⁶² This work’s overall success brought the young Mennin international attention through a recording grant from the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation and performances by prominent conductors such as Dimitri Mitropoulos, Fritz Reiner, Artur Rodzinski, Thomas Schippers, and George Szell. In a 1949 review of the work after its first publication, Richard Goldman writes:

The symphony has not the slightest sound of paper-music. This is a tribute to Mennin’s command of his idiom and his understanding of musical realities behind dexterities of technique. One feels spontaneity and life in the music rather than cleverness; although the cleverness is formidable, it never makes one feel that it is displayed as an end in itself.⁶³

Mennin scored the Third the same as his Second, except for omitting the English horn. According to the publisher, the duration of No. 3 is 23:00 minutes and actual recordings by the Seattle Symphony and the Albany Symphony list it as 20:28 and 22:14,

⁶¹ Although Symphony No. 3 was Mennin’s doctoral dissertation, he provided no written analysis of it.

⁶² Simmons, notes to *Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7; Piano Concerto*

⁶³ Richard F. Goldman, "Symphony No. 3: Peter Mennin," *Musical Quarterly* v. 35 (January 1949): 114.

respectively. This work is a bit shorter than his previous two symphonies and roughly the average duration of all his subsequent ones.

Like the Second, the Third is in three movements, but each movement is in, and completely remains in, a different time signature. The first movement is in $\frac{3}{2}$ and begins a quick Allegro robusto ($\text{♩} = 132$). It slows sixty-eight measures later to a Poco meno mosso ($\text{♩} = 120$), returning to the original tempo at mm. 112, and ending slower ($\text{♩} = 92$) from measures 182-199. The second movement is a soulful Andante moderato ($\text{♩} = 80$) for 111 measures in $\frac{4}{4}$ and the third movement is a quick Allegro assai ($\text{♩} = 132$) for 507 measures in $\frac{2}{2}$. Of each movement, Mennin wrote:

The first movement...makes use of two ideas that are developed polyphonically. Rhythmic and melodic extensions finally lead to a canon for full orchestra. The movement ends quietly.

The second movement...is an extended song that moves along expressively, making use of sustained voice-weaving.

The third movement...is a movement of full rhythmic impulse and with broad lines set off by polyphony of the orchestra.⁶⁴

The polyphony that Mennin repeatedly mentions is one of the most important style characteristics of his music from this point on. All of his later symphonies except No. 9 make extensive use of counterpoint in one form or another, often overshadowing the functional importance of harmony (see Ex. 3).

⁶⁴ Peter Mennin, as quoted from the liner notes to Mennin, Schwarz, and Seattle Symphony Orchestra, *Peter Mennin: Moby Dick; Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7*.

The image displays a musical score for four instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in 3/2 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Violin I part starts with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Violin II part starts with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Viola part starts with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The Violoncello part starts with a half note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The score shows a complex counterpoint with various intervals and melodic lines.

Ex. 3. Counterpoint. Symphony No. 3, Movement III, mm. 257-267. © 1946, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Mennin's imitative counterpoint is rarely strict, usually spinning out in a fashion similar to that of the Renaissance *ricercar* or *fantasia*. This is understandable since Mennin often acknowledged "the choral masters of the Renaissance" as a strong compositional influence.⁶⁵ Richard Goldman writes of his proficiency incorporating the

⁶⁵ "Peter Mennin," 310.

old techniques: “He has in some way found time to acquire a scholar’s knowledge of principles and a craftsman’s mastery of techniques that are wholly remarkable; he can talk intelligently and enthusiastically about “old” music and yet write music of his own that is neither academic nor self-consciously mannered.”⁶⁶ Another technique borrowed from the Renaissance (before measured music) is his treatment of the melody as independent from the bar line. Mennin does not let the bar line inhibit the freedom of his melodies and he uses this approach throughout his later works (see Ex. 4).



Ex. 4. Melody independent from the bar line. Symphony No. 3, Movement I, mm. 4-10. © 1946, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Mennin’s themes in the Third are mostly modal, though he favors both raised and lowered versions of scale degrees, particularly the third and second (see Ex. 5).



Ex. 5. Chromatic inflections of a melody. Symphony No. 3, Movement I, mm. 19-24. © 1946, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

⁶⁶ Goldman, "Symphony No. 3: Peter Mennin," 112.

He also uses overlapping ostinatos (as seen in the Second) in all movements, where they again emphasize modal harmonies (see Ex. 6).

The musical score for measures 112-116 of Symphony No. 3, Movement I, features three staves: Viola 1, Viola 2, and Violoncello 1. All staves are in 3/2 time and marked *pp* (pianissimo). Viola 1 and Viola 2 play overlapping eighth-note ostinatos in G Lydian and C Lydian modes. Violoncello 1 plays a slower, more melodic line in E Dorian mode, featuring long intervals and a sustained, singing quality.

Ex. 6. Overlapping modal ostinatos of G Lydian, C Lydian, and E Dorian. Symphony No. 3, Movement I, mm. 112-116. © 1946, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

The Third Symphony is where Mennin first begins to use and develop his characteristic long melodic lines. He incorporates these “long lines” throughout all of his subsequent symphonies. Even just two years before his death, Mennin stated in an interview: “Though certain things have changed a little bit, the long, singing line hasn’t; it’s something that, to this moment, I believe in, and I think it’s one of the reasons why one writes music.”⁶⁷ A good example of the typical Mennin long line occurs at the end of movement III, where he takes one of the movement’s themes (originally fifteen measures in length) and, through augmentation, creates an extended melody that now covers fifty-eight measures (see Ex. 7).

⁶⁷ Owens, “Composer Peter Mennin: An Interview.”

The musical score displays five staves of music. The first staff is for Oboe, starting with a dynamic of *p* and a *mf* section. The subsequent four staves are for Oboe (Ob.), featuring dynamics of *f*, *ff*, and *sfz*. The melody is characterized by long, flowing lines with various articulations and dynamic markings.

Ex. 7. A typically long melody in C Locrian, played by the woodwinds and violins. Symphony No. 3, Movement III, mm. 384-441. © 1946, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Also, Mennin regularly uses long lines in his slow movements, since his slow movements are always in a solemn and singing, contrasting character to the surrounding fast movements (see Ex. 8).

The image displays a musical score for four violin parts. The top staff is labeled 'Violin I' and begins with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The second staff is labeled 'Vln. I' and includes a *cresc. molto* (crescendo molto) marking. The third staff is labeled 'Vln. I' and features a *ff* (fortissimo) dynamic followed by a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The bottom staff is labeled 'Vln. I' and includes a *p* (piano) dynamic, a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking, and a *ppp* (pianississimo) dynamic. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a variety of musical notations, including slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Ex. 8. A long melody from Mennin's second movement. Symphony No. 3, Movement II, mm. 36-57. © 1946, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

After graduating from Eastman, Mennin—only twenty-four years old—accepted an appointment to the composition faculty of Juilliard, where he remained for about eleven years. In addition, he married, on 28 August 1947, Georganne Bairnson (b. 1924), a violinist and, like himself, a recent graduate of Eastman.⁶⁸ Together they would have two children, Felicia Anne (b. 1958) and Mark (b. 1960), both of whom attended the Juilliard Preparatory Division,⁶⁹ though neither pursued musical careers.⁷⁰

During Mennin's first year at Juilliard, Walter Hendl and the New York Philharmonic premiered his *Fantasia for String Orchestra* and he received the first of his two Guggenheim Fellowship Grants. Mennin also returned to writing works for voice. He

⁶⁸ Ewen, *American Composers a Biographical Dictionary*, 450.

⁶⁹ Soria, "Artist Life," MA-7.

⁷⁰ Ayers, "The Major Choral Works of Peter Mennin." 10.

composed *Four Settings of Chinese Poems by Kiang Kang-Hu*⁷¹ for a cappella SATB chorus and wrote his first, and only, choral symphony (No. 4, subtitled “The Cycle”).

Symphony No. 4 (*The Cycle*)

For Mennin, it had been about seven years since he last composed for voice, and those works he completed while still a student. Symphony No. 4 was his first “professional” symphony, commissioned by Robert Shaw’s Collegiate Chorale. It shows a marked change in the overall scope and technique of his symphonic writing, which may be because of his shift from student to teacher and to the influences of his new surroundings at Juilliard. These changes mark the beginning of Mennin’s mature “middle period” of symphony composition. This period includes Symphony Nos. 4-6.

According to Mennin, the Fourth is “a symphony of two forces of equal importance.”⁷² He composed it for SATB chorus and orchestra, with the same orchestra instrumentation as the Third, though with a separate piccolo part and no third flute. Its published duration is 23:00 minutes (like the Third) and the commercial recording by the Camerata Singers and Symphony Orchestra lists it as 23:55.

In addition to composing the music, Mennin also wrote the short text to the work (see appendix A). He said he did so because he was unable to find, “a very simple, bony text that could bear repetition over and over and not interfere with the developments of the music.”⁷³ Unfortunately, the text has been a source of great criticism: “No darling of

⁷¹ The Juilliard Music Foundation commissioned *Four Settings*, which consists of *In the Quiet Night*, *A Song of the Palace*, *Crossing the Han River*, and *The Gold Threaded Robe*. Translations by Witter Bynner.

⁷² Peter Mennin, as quoted in Ayers, “The Major Choral Works of Peter Mennin.” 38.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3.

the muse, Mr. Mennin satisfied himself with the statement of a few large ideas, which presumably meant a great deal to him when he was conceiving the symphony...I do not think Mr. Mennin's poetry will find its way into many anthologies."⁷⁴ "[The Fourth's] basic materials are less inspired than the handling of them... Fortunately, [Mennin] is a far better composer than poet, and his treatment of the chorus is remarkably effective."⁷⁵

The Collegiate Chorale premiered the Fourth in Carnegie Hall with Robert Shaw and the New York Philharmonic on 18 March 1949. Despite any possible weaknesses with the text, a *Time* magazine review of the premiere praised the work:

Mennin's Fourth, "The Cycle," was an ambitious choral symphony in which he worked out the chorus in all three movements instead of just the last (as Beethoven did in his Ninth)...At times, [it] sounded as if it were about to sound like someone else; there were Stravinsky-like dissonances, used sparingly and for punctuation, in the opening of the rhythm in first movement, and there were Hindemith or Shostakovich traces in the lyric andante. But each time, and overall, the music came out strongly Mennin—energetically powerful, open and clean.⁷⁶

The Fourth follows his usual three-movement format: a fast Allegro energico (♩ = 132); a slow Andante arioso (♩ = 60); and a fast Allegro deciso (♩ = 132). However, uncommon to his symphonies up to this time, Mennin begins a fast movement with a slower introduction.⁷⁷ He did this again in his Sixth, Eighth, and Ninth symphonies.

⁷⁴ Cecil Smith, "Symphony No. 4 the Cycle--for a Chorus of Mixed Voices and Orchestra," *Notes* v. 6 (June 1949): 488.

⁷⁵ Robert Sabin, "A Choral Symphony by a Young American," *Musical America* v. 69 (April 15, 1949): 36.

⁷⁶ "No. 4," 45.

⁷⁷ The slower introduction is in the last movement of the Fourth, which begins at a *Pronunziato* (♩ = 92) for 25 measures.

Also for the first time, Mennin beams notes through the bar line. This approach is typical of Mennin's later works and allows him to show overlapping phrases that may not line up with bar lines or with other simultaneous phrases (see Ex. 9).

Ex. 9. Beaming through the bar lines. Symphony No. 4, Movement I, mm. 23-29. © 1948, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Walter Hendl comments on the freedom of Mennin's melodies:

The bar line plays little or no inhibiting part in determining the full freedom of the melodies...The variety and flexibility of rhythm immediately become apparent when one notices the overlapping of phrases of unequal length. This irregularity produces a subtle polyrhythmic effect that thrusts the music constantly forward. It is this spontaneous feeling for the smallest unit of rhythm that gives Mennin's music its natural flexibility and variety.⁷⁸

Also lending to the music's flexibility and variety is Mennin's use of meter in the Fourth. Although the first movement remains in $\frac{2}{4}$ for all but two of its 327 measures,

⁷⁸ Walter Hendl, "The Music of Peter Mennin," *Juilliard Review* Spring (1954): 20,22-3.

the second movement, which begins in $\frac{3}{4}$, frequently changes meter throughout its 123-measure length. Likewise, the third movement's 446 measures begin in $\frac{3}{2}$ and also frequently change meter, though not as rapidly as in the previous one. Mennin uses meter shifts to allow the words to line up with downbeats, while not making them conform to the rigid patterns of regular meters (see Ex. 10).

The image displays a musical score for four vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. Each part is written on a staff with a treble or bass clef. The lyrics are: "Time pass - ing, wa - ters flow-ing, — The great cy - cle be-gins once more,". The score illustrates frequent meter changes, with time signatures including $\frac{3}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{4}{4}$, and $\frac{2}{4}$. The lyrics are aligned with the downbeats of the measures, demonstrating Mennin's technique of using meter shifts to maintain word alignment despite irregular meter changes.

Ex. 10. Shifting meters. Symphony No.4, Movement III, mm. 1-7. © 1948, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

By adding instrumental melodies that freely move about the bar lines, Mennin creates a complex structure that flows naturally and openly while maintaining complete independence in all parts (see Ex. 11).

Soprano
back to the earth, come back.

Alto
mem-ber an-cient con-flicts and are-si-lent. Come back.

Tenor
a-gain, Come back and feel her roots. Man for-

Bass
Come_

Piano Reduction
f

Ex. 11. Shifting meters and beams through bar lines. Symphony No. 4, Movement II, mm. 61-64. © 1948, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

The unifying motive that ties all three movements together is the descending minor second, an interval that is present in all but one of the Fourth's themes.⁷⁹ Mennin favors the minor second (ascending or descending) in most of his later works (see Ex. 12).

Piano Reduction
ff

Ex. 12. Minor seconds in the first theme. Symphony No. 4, Movement I, mm. 1-5. © 1948, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

⁷⁹ Ayers, "The Major Choral Works of Peter Mennin." 44.

The Fourth certainly was a large undertaking. According to Mennin, “Virgil Thompson said it was like combining an army with an air force with one project in mind.”⁸⁰ Some critics, however, dispute Mennin’s effectiveness of combining the performing forces:

The orchestral part is so complete in itself that the choral contribution, mostly homophonic, sounds more an addition to the texture grafted on than an independent element. This impression is confirmed by the instrumental character of the vocal lines often doubled by the orchestra.⁸¹

Critic Cecil Smith even disagrees about the Fourth being, in fact, a “symphony.”

The designation of the work as a symphony implies that the composer expects us to regard *The Cycle* as more than a typical choral-orchestral setting of a text—that he has sought to bring the choral and textual aspects of the work within the intellectual and structural frame of characteristically symphonic development.

...Mr. Mennin has not written a symphony. What he has done is to compose continuity in the orchestra, of more or less symphonic character—expounding, developing, and summing up his themes in fairly orthodox fashion.⁸²

Overall though, most critics, like Karl Miller of the *American Record Guide*, give the Fourth a tepid review: “The Fourth Symphony is not among his best, but it is filled with vigor and drive.”⁸³

In 1949, Mennin wrote two more vocal works. The first one, *Two Choruses for Women’s Voices*,⁸⁴ was for a commission from the Sigma Alpha Iota Music Fraternity.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 38.

⁸¹ Neil Butterworth, *The American Symphony* (Aldershot England ; Brookfield Vt.: Ashgate, 1998), 157.

⁸² Smith, "Symphony No. 4 the Cycle--for a Chorus of Mixed Voices and Orchestra," 488.

⁸³ Karl Miller, "Mennin: Symphony 4 the Cycle; Ginastera: Milena," *American Record Guide* (1990): 80.

The second one, a cantata titled *The Christmas Story*,⁸⁵ was for the United Protestant Church Radio Commission and premiered 24 December 1949 on New York City's WABC by Robert Shaw and the Robert Shaw Chorale. Also that year, Mennin composed *Five Piano Pieces*, for solo piano.⁸⁶

Symphony No. 5

In 1950, when Mennin was 27, he received a Centennial Citation for Distinguished Service to Music from the University of Rochester. In addition, he wrote the Fifth Symphony for a \$1000 commission from the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Walter Hendl and the DSO premiered the Fifth on 2 April and a review of the performance appeared in *Time* magazine:

In Dallas' last concert of the season, *No. 5* shared the program with Beethoven's *Symphony No. 3*. Mennin's short three-movement work did not have the "Eroica's" earth-shaking vitality, but it did have plenty of vim & vigor of its own...If not boldly original harmonically and rhythmically, *No. 5* seemed always fresh and not too hard to take. The 2,300 listeners showed, by their ovation, that they thought the \$1000 was pretty well spent.⁸⁷

Charles Munch and the Boston Symphony Orchestra first performed the Fifth in Boston on 6 January 1951 and then eleven days later for the first time in New York. Of the BSO's Boston performance, critic Harold Rogers writes:

⁸⁴ For SSA chorus and piano, consisting of *Bought Hair* (text from the Latin of Martial) and *Tumbling Locks* (text by e. e. cummings).

⁸⁵ Scored for solo soprano and tenor voices, SATB chorus, two trumpets, two trombones, timpani, and strings.

⁸⁶ Premiered by Grant Johannesen in New York City, 28 March 1950. In 1999, Wayne Richard Pierce arranged *Five Piano Pieces* for Orchestra. Pierce, "An Orchestral Transcription of Peter Mennin's Five Piano Pieces Based on a Study of His Early Works for Orchestra. (1942-1953)".

⁸⁷ "\$1000 Well Spent," *Time*, 17 April 1950, 88.

Peter Mennin...is a composer whose music comes to Symphony Hall like a clean, cold, and invigorating north wind. His Fifth Symphony...is filled with sinew and snap. Thoroughly masculine in its make-up, it is music that makes the happy appeal to both the intelligence and the emotions. Mr. Mennin brings a bright hope to American music. He brings the vigor of his youth, a large measure of originality, and the strength that comes from knowing where he is going.

...the outstanding feature of the concerts this week is Peter Mennin's Fifth. With it he is making history in American music today.⁸⁸

Composer Henry Cowell reviewed the New York performance:

The first performance in New York of Peter Mennin's Fifth Symphony...was a spirited one. The symphony's three movements...are thoroughly integrated in style and interrelated through use of the same thematic material both melodically and rhythmically. [It] maintains a convincing feeling of dignity, musicality, skill, unity, and melodic breadth.⁸⁹

The scoring for the Fifth is the same as the Fourth, except without the choir. The work is in Mennin's usual three-movement, fast-slow-fast format: Con vigore (♩ = 126 for 193 measures); Canto (Andante Arioso, ♩ = 66-72, for 128 measures); and Allegro tempestuoso⁹⁰ (♩ = 126-132 for 496 measures). All three movements stay in their initial time signatures: $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{4}{4}$, and $\frac{2}{4}$. According to the publisher, its duration is 22:00 minutes and commercial recordings by the Albany Symphony and Eastman-Rochester Orchestra list its duration as 21:16 and 22:03, respectively.

In the liner notes from the Louisville Orchestra's recording, Mennin writes:

⁸⁸ Harold Rogers, "Mennin's Fifth Symphony," *Christian Science Monitor*, 6 January 1951, 11.

⁸⁹ Henry Cowell, "Review of Mennin's Symphony No. 5," *Musical Quarterly* v. 37, no. 2 (April 1951): 248, 250.

⁹⁰ In 1982, Allegro tempestuoso was arranged for band by Frank Bencriscutto. Peter Mennin, *Allegro Tempestuoso (from Symphony No. 5), Arranged by Frank Bencriscutto* (New York: Carl Fischer).

Each of the movements has its own basic character, and achieves contrast within itself through the musical materials and textures rather than from changes in tempo. This is not unlike the principle which guided composers of the Renaissance. The basic aim of this work is expressivity. Therefore, there is a great emphasis placed on the broad melodic line, and little use of color for color's sake. Orchestrally speaking, the colors used are primary rather than pastel in quality. Hence, the work as a whole is direct, assertive and terse in communication.⁹¹

The *United Press International* recently wrote that the Fifth is "one of the most powerful tonal symphonies of the 20th century...[and] would probably be ranked with Copland's Third and Harris's Third if everyone heard it. It has one of the most exciting final movements in the entire classical repertory."⁹² This symphony is the focus of Chapter 3, where it receives a thorough analysis (see "Analysis of Peter Mennin's Symphony No. 5," page 62).

In 1951, Mennin completed two more commissions. One was for Canzona for Band, requested through the League of Composers by the composer and bandmaster Edwin Franko Goldman. Goldman first performed it in New York City, 15 June 1951 conducting his Goldman Band. The second commission was by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation for String Quartet No. 2, which won the Columbia Records Chamber Music Award. The Juilliard String Quartet premiered it 24 February 1952 in New York City.

For a commission by the Erie Philharmonic, Mennin wrote Concertato for Orchestra (*Moby Dick*) in 1952. This one-movement orchestral work is related to the Melville novel, though it does not musically follow the story. Mennin originally intended to write an opera based on the book, but finally decided the story would not sustain

⁹¹ Peter Mennin, notes to Peter Mennin, *Recordings of Works Commissioned by the Louisville Philharmonic Society for the Louisville Orchestra* (1961), LP, Louisville Philharmonic Society LOU-613.

⁹² Dicus, *Clef's Notes: May 17, 1998*.

enough interest through an opera's duration.⁹³ *Moby Dick* has the same scoring as the Fifth except for the addition of English horn and bass clarinet. Fritz Mahler and the Erie Philharmonic premiered it 20 October 1952; it is still one of Mennin's most popular works.

Symphony No. 6

In 1953, the Louisville Orchestra commissioned the Sixth Symphony and performed it later that year on 18 November with Robert Whitney conducting. Dimitri Mitropoulos and the New York Philharmonic then premiered it in New York 17 February 1955 and critic Irving Kolodin reviewed the performance in the *Saturday Review*:

It is scarcely believable that Peter Mennin, who won't be thirty-two until May, has already written six symphonies worth performance by our major orchestras. But the sixth...is such a plausible piece of music, with so well-shaped a structure, so well-filled in a façade, that one can't either ignore the facts or dispose of them lightly.⁹⁴

Paul Snook later reviewed the Sixth in *Fanfare*:

The Sixth is the crowning summation of [Mennin's] prodigious spurt of youthful inspiration...This is an obsessive, tragic, and metaphysical music, with a narrow range of reference but a deep cutting edge of significance, full of the destructive fury and enigma of American power which lies behind Ahab's quest and what Henry James once called "the imagination of disaster."⁹⁵

The Sixth uses the same instruments as *Moby Dick*, except there are two trumpet parts instead of the usual three. According to the publisher, its duration is 25:00 minutes

⁹³ Ayers, "The Major Choral Works of Peter Mennin." 4.

⁹⁴ Irving Kolodin, "Music to My Ears: Mennin and Milanov," *Saturday Review*, 5 March 1955, 29.

⁹⁵ Snook, "Review: Mennin: Symphony No. 6; Riegger: Variations for Piano and Orchestra; Toch: Notturmo," 126.

and the recording by the Albany Symphony is 26:08. Except for Mennin's Ninth symphony, this is the last one in his standard three-movement, fast-slow-fast plan.

As in the Fourth, Mennin begins a fast movement with a slow introduction. The first one starts out *Maestoso* ($\text{♩} = 52$), but soon quickens to *Allegro* ($\text{♩} = 126$) at measure thirty-two. All 336 measures of this movement are in $\frac{4}{4}$. The second movement's 111 measures are all *Grave* ($\text{♩} = 60$) and in $\frac{4}{4}$. The third movement has 449 measures and begins *Allegro vivace* ($\text{♩} = 172$) in $\frac{9}{8}$. At measure 137 the time signature changes to $\frac{4}{2}$ and the tempo slows to *Allegro sostenuto* ($\text{♩} = 52-60$), but it slowly accelerates until measure 168 where it returns to a quick *Allegro vivace*, this time in $\frac{2}{4}$.

The first movement contains three main motives which are first displayed alone and then together in counterpoint in the strings (see Ex. 13).

The image shows a musical score for five string instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score is in 4/4 time and features three distinct themes. Theme 3 is introduced in Violin I, Theme 1 in Viola, and Theme 2 in Violoncello and Contrabass. All themes are marked *pp* (pianissimo). The themes are presented in counterpoint, with each instrument playing a different melodic line. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines, and the themes are labeled with their respective instrument parts.

Ex. 13. Three main themes in counterpoint. Symphony No. 6, Movement I, mm. 13-17. © 1953, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Theme 2 becomes an asymmetrical ostinato pattern which Mennin later uses in his usual overlapping fashion. All three motives recur throughout the three movements in different forms including imitative counterpoint (see Ex. 14).

[illegible]

Ex. 14. Parts of Theme 1 in counterpoint at the diminished fourth. Symphony No. 6, Movement I, mm. 216-227. © 1953, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Another example of Mennin's overlapping ostinato patterns can be seen in Ex. 15.

The image displays a musical score for five string instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The music is written in 3/2 time and features a complex, overlapping ostinato pattern. The Violin I and Violin II parts are in treble clef, while the Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass parts are in bass clef. The pattern consists of a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some notes being repeated or sustained across measures, creating a dense, textured sound. The score is divided into three measures, each containing a full staff of five instruments.

Ex. 15. Overlapping ostinato pattern. Symphony No. 6, Movement I, mm. 65-67. © 1953, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

In 1956, Mennin completed *Concerto for Cello and Orchestra*, commissioned by the Juilliard Musical Foundation and scored for an orchestra similar to *Symphony No. 6* (including just two trumpets), though without the bassoons, English horn, and bass clarinet. He also wrote *Sonata Concertante for Violin & Piano*, for a commission by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation in honor of the thirtieth anniversary of the League of Composers.

In 1957, he spent a year in Europe on Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships and in 1958, at the invitation of the U.S. State Department, he, along with Roy Harris, Ulysses Kay, and Roger Sessions, participated in the first cultural exchange of composers with the Soviet Union. Also that year, he wrote *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*,⁹⁶ for

⁹⁶ The orchestra is scored the same as *Symphony No. 6*, without the English horn and bass clarinet.

the Cleveland Orchestra's 40th Anniversary. Furthermore, two big events occurred in his life: his first child, Felicia Anne was born, and he became the Director of the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore.

At Peabody, Mennin—now only thirty-five—brought about a number of changes to promote the practical application of his student's training. Mennin explained in an interview:

What I've tried to do at Peabody... is make all live music and all theoretical knowledge closely related... In many schools, knowledge for the sake of knowledge has displaced the knowledge that a composer or performer is expected to acquire in order to make a living as a professional. I'm simply against that.⁹⁷

First, he required all students to study solfeggio (as he had done early in his training with Tito Spantani). He reduced the number of methods courses that were required in order to allow students more time to practice. He established the Peabody Art Theater, which provided performance opportunities for students and also for rarely performed works. He also established the American Conductors Project, which allowed American conductors to participate actively in the concert productions of major orchestras, with major conductors such as George Szell, Fritz Reiner, and Leonard Bernstein.

Mennin surely had his hands full, especially the first year, between becoming a father, traveling to the Soviet Union, relocating to Baltimore, and embarking on a new administrative career. He, however, made the change from teacher to administrator to gain more time to compose:

⁹⁷ Peter Mennin, as quoted in Carrington, "'for the Sake of Art': A Talk with Peter Mennin.," 81.

The reason I got into administration was because I found, for me as a composer, that it interfered with composition less than teaching...I would go home tired—too tired to compose...Administration was a way to help my composition, not the other way around. If I found it ever interfered, I would drop it quickly without a second thought.⁹⁸

From this point on, though, Mennin's life and output changed drastically. His initial role as an administrator does seem to have interfered with his composing, since he did not publish any new works during his four years directing Peabody. Furthermore, he would now take about ten years between each of his last three symphonies (his previous six were written with an average of only two years between them). When Mennin began publishing works again in 1963, his music was much darker, more dissonant, and more complex, thus signaling his third, and final, symphonic period.

The last three of Mennin's nine symphonies represent a total contrast with the earlier ones of the set. Gone is the exhilarating *bonhomie* and academic professional correctness to be replaced by an resolute determination to express the darker side of life.⁹⁹

Gone are the mannerisms, motor rhythms for pages at a time and over-repetition of figures. The harmonic language is now less tonal with more complex contrapuntal writing.¹⁰⁰

On 1 November 1962, after four years at Peabody, Mennin returned to Juilliard now as its president. He replaced William Schuman, former president for seventeen years, and would remain there himself for about twenty years until his death in 1983. Interestingly, though, Mennin also stayed on as a consultant to Peabody during his first year as President.

In 1963, Mennin began composing again in full force by writing three large works. The first one, *Canto for Orchestra*, was a one-movement orchestral work

⁹⁸ Peter Mennin, as quoted in Ayers, "The Major Choral Works of Peter Mennin." 5-6.

⁹⁹ Butterworth, *The American Symphony*, 159.

commissioned by the Association of Women's Committees for Symphony Orchestras. He scored it for the same instruments as his Sixth, though with the usual three trumpets. It was premiered 4 March 1963 by Victor Alessandro conducting the San Antonio Symphony. The second work was Sonata for Piano, commissioned by Claudette Sorel through the Ford Foundation Program for Concert Artists, and his third work was the Seventh Symphony.

Symphony No. 7 (Variation Symphony)

Mennin completed the Seventh Symphony about ten years after he completed his Sixth and it is a huge departure from all his other symphonies. Though scored virtually the same as the Sixth, but with the usual three trumpets and an added contrabassoon, the Seventh is a one-movement symphony. It is broken into five sections that develop themes in non-standard ways. He explains: “It has little relationship to the consecutive variation principle, but instead uses techniques of variation resulting from the overall structural and dramatic concept.”¹⁰¹

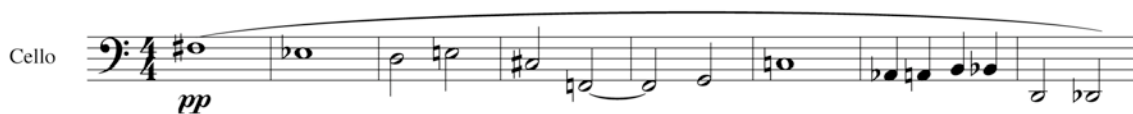
The five sections loosely correspond to customary four movement symphonic form with the fifth movement summarizing in an extensive Allegro epilogue.¹⁰² The first section, which Mennin annotates as “expository in nature, then declamatory in style,”¹⁰³ is an Adagio ($\text{♩} = 60$) of 105 measures that varies between $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$. The work’s first theme uses eleven notes of the chromatic scale (see Ex. 16).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 157.

¹⁰¹ Peter Mennin, as quotes in Jim Svejda, notes to Peter Mennin, *Moby Dick; Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7* (1996), CD, Delos 3164.

¹⁰² Butterworth, *The American Symphony*, 158.

¹⁰³ Peter Mennin, as quoted in Svejda, notes to *Moby Dick; Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7*



The second section is an Allegro ($\text{♩} = 126+$) of 271 measures in $\frac{2}{2}$. Mennin labels it “elements of a Scherzo, but dramatic in quality.”¹⁰⁴ He develops the same two themes from the first section.

The third section is an Andante ($\text{♩} = 60 = 66$) that varies between a number of simple and mixed meters (and one measure of $\frac{9}{8}$) for 114 measures. Mennin says it is “basically a slow movement with contrasting sections, emphasizing duality of opening material.”¹⁰⁵

The fourth section, which Mennin calls “cumulative variations,”¹⁰⁶ is a Moderato ($\text{♩} = 96$) for 129 measures that also changes time signatures frequently. The final section is an Allegro vivace in $\frac{4}{4}$ for eighty-four measures (no tempo marking is given). This section contains a “new use of musical ideas, and final summing up.”¹⁰⁷

According to the publisher, the duration of the Seventh is 26:00 minutes and commercial recordings by the Seattle and Chicago Symphonies list it as 26:11 and 26:31, respectively. The Cleveland Orchestra commissioned the Seventh, though according to Mennin, it was George Szell who really paid for it “out of his own pocket.”¹⁰⁸ Szell had been a long supporter of Mennin: “I...felt that he was one of the most loyal friends I ever had.”¹⁰⁹ George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra premiered the work 23 January 1964 and first performed it in New York 17 February.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Carrington, ““for the Sake of Art”: A Talk with Peter Mennin.,” 41.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Neil Butterworth wrote in *The American Symphony* that “Mennin’s Seventh Symphony represents the peak of his symphonic achievement, a closely argued work of massive integrity. It can rank among the finest of the American symphonic tradition of this century.”¹¹⁰ Also, critic Walter Simmons considers the Seventh one of the greatest American symphonies,¹¹¹ as does Karl Miller, who even states that it is “one of the finest essays in symphonic form written in the 20th Century.”¹¹²

In 1969, Mennin composed his most ambitious work: *Cantata de Virtute (The Pied Piper of Hamelin)*. This forty-two minute work incorporates soloists, two choirs, and orchestra. Based on Robert Browning’s poem with additional Latin secular and religious texts, Mennin scored it for solo tenor and baritone voices, narrator, children's chorus, SATB chorus, and the same orchestra instruments as in Symphony No. 7. It was commissioned by the Cincinnati Musical Festival Association for their 1969 May Festival and premiered 2 May of that year by Max Rudolf conducting the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. There have been few subsequent performances because of the enormous performing forces and extensive rehearsal time required.¹¹³

In 1970, Mennin wrote another single-movement work originally titled *Symphonic Movements*, but later renamed *Sinfonia*. This fifteen-minute work was performed in Minneapolis 21 January 1971, but later withdrawn by the composer for

¹¹⁰ Butterworth, *The American Symphony*, 158.

¹¹¹ Walter G. Simmons, *Five Picks of the Year: 1997* [Web Page] 1997, accessed 22 February 2003; available from <http://www.walter-simmons.com/articles/115.htm>.

¹¹² Karl Miller, *Peter Mennin Symphonies* (Classical Net Review, 1997, accessed 3 March 2003); available from <http://www.classical.net/~music/recs/reviews/a/alb00260a.html>.

¹¹³ Ayers, “The Major Choral Works of Peter Mennin.” 8.

unknown reasons. He scored it for the same instruments as the Seventh, with the addition of a fourth trumpet and a third flute part.

Symphony No. 8

Mennin completed his Eighth Symphony in 1973, approximately ten years after the Seventh. According to the publisher, its duration is 26:00 minutes and the Columbus Symphony's recording lists it as 27:08. Of the symphonies he wrote after college (Nos. 4-9), this is his longest one; it is also the only one which was not commissioned. Nonetheless, Daniel Barenboim and the New York Philharmonic premiered it 21 November 1974 and Harold C. Schonberg reviewed the premiere in the *New York Times*:

The scoring is sharp and clear, even with textures that look impossibly thick in the score. Mr. Mennin is, after all, an old pro, and he has achieved some brilliant sounds. He has always been happy with impulsive rhythmic patterns, and the Eighth Symphony is full of those. He has put everything together neatly and precisely.¹¹⁴

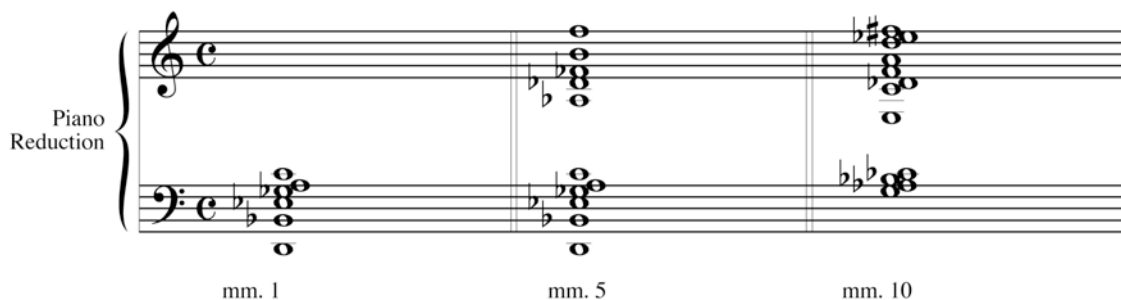
Although scored for virtually the same instrumentation as his Seventh, except for using only one bassoon and one extra flute (doubling the piccolo), the Eighth represents another radical change in Mennin's symphonic approach. First of all, this is a far more dissonant work than his other symphonies. "The language is uncompromisingly harsh, at times dense in texture and often very dramatic...[it is] a work of disturbing violence which makes huge technical demands on the orchestra."¹¹⁵ Though, as Mennin explains, it still retains harmonic centers: "In my Eighth Symphony, you might not recognize the

¹¹⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: A New Mennin," *New York Times*, 22 November 1974.

¹¹⁵ Butterworth, *The American Symphony*, 158-9.

tonality, as such, but I feel it very tonal, even though in many spots there are all 12 notes being used simultaneously.”¹¹⁶

In this symphony, Mennin uses large stacked chords, or tone clusters, in a “sound mass” technique following that of Ligeti’s *Atmospheres* (see Ex. 18).



Ex. 18. Piano reduction of opening tone clusters. Symphony No. 8, Movement I, mm. 1, 5, 10. © 1973, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

He also uses non-traditional effects such as long trills, glissandos, and vertical dynamics notation (see Ex. 19 and Ex. 20).

¹¹⁶ Peter Mennin, as quoted in Owens, "Composer Peter Mennin: An Interview."

The musical score is for a 2/4 time signature. It features six staves: Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in Bb, Horn in F 1, and Horn in F 2. The Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, and Clarinet in Bb parts begin with a long trill (marked *p*) that transitions into a long glissando (marked *ff*). The Horn in F 1 and Horn in F 2 parts remain silent until the fourth measure, where they enter with a long glissando (marked *ff*). The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Ex. 19. Long trills and glissandos. Symphony No. 8, Movement IV, mm. 23-27. © 1973, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

The image displays a musical score for measures 169-170 of the second movement of Symphony No. 8. The score is written for eight instruments: Violin I 1, Violin I 2, Violin II 1, Violin II 2, Viola 1, Viola 2, Violoncello 1, Violoncello 2, and Contrabass. The time signature is 3/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score illustrates vertical dynamics notation, where dynamics are indicated by vertical lines and slurs connecting specific notes across different staves. Dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo), *f* (forte), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *p* (piano). Triplet markings (3) are present in several staves, including Violin I 2, Violin II 2, Viola 2, Violoncello 2, and Contrabass. The notation shows a complex interplay of dynamics across the ensemble, with some instruments playing sustained chords and others moving more rapidly.

Ex. 20. Vertical dynamics notation. Symphony No. 8, Movement II, mm. 169-170. © 1973, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Although the Eighth is not a serial work, Mennin sometimes uses a pointillistic texture in a way similar to Webern (see Ex. 21).

The image displays a musical score for an orchestral section, specifically a pointillistic texture. The score is written for Violin I 1, Violin I 2, Violin I 3, Violin II 1, Violin II 2, Violin II 3, Viola 1, Viola 2, Cello 1, Cello 2, and Contrabass 1. The music is in 2/4 time. The texture is characterized by short, staccato notes and rests, often marked with *sf* (sforzando) dynamics. The notes are distributed across the instruments, creating a fragmented, pointillistic effect. The score is written in treble and bass clefs, with some instruments using a 12/8 time signature for specific parts. The overall effect is one of rhythmic precision and dynamic contrast.

Ex. 21. Pointillistic texture. Symphony No. 8, Movement II, mm. 79-83. © 1973, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

He also writes many chromatic runs distributed across the orchestra (see Ex. 22 and Ex. 23).

The image displays a musical score for the first three measures of the second movement of Symphony No. 8. The score is written for a woodwind section, including Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, English Horn, Clarinet in Bb, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon 1, and Bassoon 2. The key signature is two flats (Bb and Eb), and the time signature is 2/4. The music is characterized by rapid chromatic figures, often marked with *ff* (fortissimo) and featuring sixteenth-note runs. The Piccolo part begins in measure 2 with a triplet of eighth notes. The Flute, Oboe, and English Horn parts feature sixteenth-note runs, with the Oboe and English Horn parts marked with *ff*. The Clarinet in Bb part also features sixteenth-note runs, marked with *ff*. The Bass Clarinet, Bassoon 1, and Bassoon 2 parts feature sixteenth-note runs, with the Bassoon 1 part marked with *ff*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Ex. 22. Characteristic rapid chromatic figures. Symphony No. 8, Movement II, mm. 1-3.
© 1973, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

The image displays a page from a musical score for Symphony No. 8, Movement II, measures 58-60. The score is written for a full orchestra, with parts for Piccolo, Flute 1, Flute 2, Clarinet in Bb 1, Clarinet in Bb 2, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon 1, Bassoon 2, Violin I 1, Violin I 2, Violin I 3, Violin I 4, Viola 1, and Cello 1. The music is in 4/4 time and features complex chromatic figures, including triplets and sextuplets, dispersed across the ensemble. The notation is dense, with many notes and rests, and the key signature is one flat (Bb).

Ex. 23. Chromatic figures dispersed across the orchestra. Symphony No. 8, Movement II, mm. 58-60. © 1973, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Another distinctiveness of the Eighth is that it is in four movements, as opposed to Mennin's usual three. Each movement is also given a Biblical epigraph: *In principio* (In the Beginning); *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath); *De profundis clamavi* (Out of the Depths); and *Laudate Dominum* (Praise Ye the Lord).¹¹⁷ This is the only programmatic work Mennin wrote and unfortunately, he does not explain these references.

¹¹⁷ Translations from Schonberg, "Music: A New Mennin."

Although the Eighth is in four movements, the first, third, and last movements still follow his typical fast-slow-fast design. The first movement begins *Sostenuto* ($\text{♩} = \text{circa } 60$), speeds up to ($\text{♩} = 76$) at measure thirty-nine, and returns to ($\text{♩} = 60$) at measure fifty-eight. It ends slower ($\text{♩} = 52$) at measure seventy-six, and all of the movement's ninety-two measures are in $\frac{4}{4}$.

The second movement begins *Allegro con molto* ($\text{♩} = \text{circa } 104\text{-}112$), slows to ($\text{♩} = 72$) at measure 112, returns to the initial tempo at measure 139, and ends ($\text{♩} = 120+$) starting at measure 185. All of its 224 measures are in $\frac{2}{4}$. The slow third movement's one hundred measures of $\frac{4}{4}$ begin *Adagio* ($\text{♩} = \text{circa } 60$), accelerate to ($\text{♩} = \text{circa } 76$) in measure fifty-four and then return to the initial tempo at measure sixty-three.

The tense and agitated sounding fourth movement is the only one with a time signature change. It begins an *Allegro vivace* ($\text{♩} = 132$) in $\frac{2}{4}$, slows to ($\text{♩} = 120$) at measure 145, returns to the initial tempo at measure 176, slows again to ($\text{♩} = 120$) in measure 268, and once again returns to the initial tempo at measure 329. At measure 354, the time signature changes to $\frac{4}{4}$ but the tempo remains the same. There are a few more time changes from this point to the end of the movement at measure 432.

This symphony (and later, his Ninth) originally seemed to gain a great deal of criticism for being viewed as a derivative of other composer's works. "Everything sounds a little secondhand; the symphony does not really say very much."¹¹⁸ However, recent reevaluation now views it as being in an individual style, independent from that of other composers, and praises it for its emotional conviction:

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 30.

The Eighth Symphony shows the composer in sombre and austere mood: with its Biblical headings to each movement, the music reveals anguish and pessimism, articulated by dark textures and brooding sonorities. . . . More than any other piece by Mennin, this is a powerful *cri de coeur* in which the composer bares his soul, and his fears and doubts, through a medium of boldly conceived musical language. Only in the final bars does the light of major tonality shine through the clouded skies.¹¹⁹

In 1975, Mennin wrote the chamber work, *Voices*, for solo mezzo-soprano, harpsichord, harp, piano, and six percussionists and set it to texts by Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, and Dickinson. The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center commissioned the fifteen-minute work and premiered it 28 March 1976 with Gerard Schwarz conducting.

In 1978, he set more texts by Dickinson in his work *Reflections of Emily*, for SSA chorus, percussion, piano, and harp. This piece was commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts for the Newark Boys Chorus and first performed in New York City, 18 January 1979. Mennin also arranged a section of the work for solo harp, titled *Cadenza Capricciosa*.

Symphony No. 9

Mennin's Ninth Symphony was originally titled *Sinfonia Capricciosa*. Prior to its completion, Mennin stated:

¹¹⁹ Bret Johnson, "Record Review (Mennin: Symphonies: Nos. 8 and 9; Folk Overture. Columbus Symphony, C. C. Badea; New World)." *Tempo; a Quarterly Review of Modern Music* v. 174 (September 1990): 58.

I'm not using a number for the work, but it follows my Eighth Symphony...As the title implies, it has many capricious moments, many sharp changes, and more contrasting sections than the usual symphony. It's in four connected movements, but shorter and quite different from the last three extended symphonies I wrote.¹²⁰

Mennin did not initially use a number for this symphony, which was actually his Ninth, because of the superstition about composers dying after writing their Ninth Symphony.¹²¹ He had once stated, "I may skip the Ninth. Just go on to the Tenth."¹²²

By the time he actually completed it though, the symphony's form reverted to his usual three-movement, fast-slow-fast plan, and he did refer to it as the Ninth. Mennin died just two years after its completion, and it was his final symphony. The second movement was performed at his memorial service.¹²³

Mennin wrote the Ninth for a commission by the National Symphony Orchestra for its Fiftieth Season Anniversary in 1981. Mstislav Rostropovich and the NSO premiered it in Washington, D. C. on 10 March of that year and in a *New Yorker* review of that performance, Nickolas Kenyon praised the work: "It made a fine showpiece for the National Symphony...The bright colors of the orchestra and the fresh, open acoustics of the Concert Hall in the Kennedy Center suited the piece."¹²⁴

The published duration of the Ninth is 20:00 minutes and the commercial recording by the Columbus Symphony lists it as 20:59. Mennin scored the work similar to his Seventh, but with an additional trumpet (four total).

¹²⁰ Peter Mennin, as quoted in Suttoni, "Peter Mennin: The President of the Juilliard School Leads an Orderly Double Life as Composer and Academician," 5.

¹²¹ Some composers who died after writing nine symphonies include Beethoven, Bruckner, Dvorak, Gluck, Mahler, Schnittke, Schubert, and Vaughan Williams.

¹²² Peter Mennin, as quoted in Soria, "Artist Life," MA-6.

¹²³ Walter G. Simmons, notes to Peter Mennin, *Symphony No. 8 ; Folk Overture ; Symphony No. 9* (1989), CD, New World Records

¹²⁴ Nickolas Kenyon, "Musical Events," *New Yorker* v. 57 (1981): 148.

Of the work's three movements, the first one starts at a slow Lento, non troppo ($\text{♩} = 60$) but then quickens to ($\text{♩} = 104-108$) in measure forty-nine. Like his Fourth and Sixth Symphonies, Mennin begins this fast movement with a slow introduction. Only seven of this movement's 134 measures are not in $\frac{4}{4}$. The second movement also increases in tempo, beginning Adagio arioso ($\text{♩} = \text{circa } 52$) and changing to ($\text{♩} = 80$) at measure forty. Its ninety-eight measures begin in $\frac{3}{4}$, but frequently change to other time signatures, including $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{5}{4}$, and $\frac{6}{4}$. The final movement, Presto tumultuoso ($\text{♩} = 144+$), remains in $\frac{3}{4}$ for its entire 198 measures.

The harmonic language of the Ninth is similar to that of the Eighth in its use of tone clusters, but this work contains less use of the "sound mass" technique (see Ex. 24) and more percussion and percussion effects (see Ex. 25). When comparing the Eighth and Ninth Symphonies, Bret Johnson writes in *Tempo*: "The Ninth Symphony...has less emotional intensity than the Eighth but, if the mood of the Eighth is one of anguish and despair, that of the Ninth is one of sad resignation, especially in the slow movement."¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Johnson, "Record Review (Mennin: Symphonies: Nos. 8 and 9; Folk Overture. Columbus Symphony, C. C. Badea; New World)." 58.

Trumpet 1
in C 2

Trumpet 3
in C 4

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Tuba

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Contrabass

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

p

p

p

p

p

Ex. 24. “Sound mass” technique. Symphony No. 9, Movement I, mm. 16-18. © 1981, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

The musical score is for four percussion instruments: Timp., S. Cy., B. D., and Tubular Bells. The time signature is 3/4. The score consists of four measures. The Timp. part has two triplet patterns in measures 2 and 3. The S. Cy. and B. D. parts have sustained notes with tremolos in measures 2 and 3. The Tubular Bells part is mostly silent, with a final measure showing a melodic line.

Ex. 25. Percussion use. Symphony No. 9, Movement III, mm. 178-182. © 1981, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

To a high degree in this work, Mennin again uses overlapping ostinatos to create background textures. He even mixes scales with different tonics and different scale patterns to create an even thicker texture. For example, at measure sixty-three of the first movement, he simultaneously mixes scales such as octatonic (half-whole) on G, D, B, and G-sharp; harmonic major on C, C-sharp, and G; and harmonic minor on E (see Ex. 26).

The image shows a musical score for Symphony No. 9, Movement I, measures 63-64. The score is for a string ensemble, specifically Violin I 1, Violin I 2, Violin II 1, Violin II 2, Viola 1, Viola 2, and Cello 1. Each staff begins with a forte (ff) dynamic marking. The music consists of overlapping ostinatos in various scales, including octatonic, harmonic major, and harmonic minor. The notation includes triplets and complex rhythmic patterns.

Ex. 26. Simultaneous use of overlapping ostinatos with octatonic, harmonic major, and harmonic minor scales. Symphony No. 9, Movement I, mm. 63-64. © 1981, Carl Fischer, LLC. Reprinted with permission.

Just as with his Eighth, this work received criticism because of its alleged similarity to other composers' works. Critic Andrew Stiller wrote: "Mennin had a positive genius for cobbling together something personal out of bits and pieces of other people's work. It is often possible to identify not only specific compositions but individual phrases and bars that he has appropriated or reworked from other composers. Nowhere is there to be found so much as a note of which it could be said: this could only

have been written by Peter Mennin.”¹²⁶ However, of both the Eighth and Ninth, Edith Borroff gives an opposing view:

Mennin was *maestro assoluto* of orchestral writing at a time when the radicals were taking their business elsewhere. What is so electrifying in these works is: one, that the many new sounds devolve upon meaning and are not mere “effects” (though strikingly effective); and two, that the works are not just “rhythmic” but *live* in rhythm and texture, which are primary and organic...I am tired of having fine American works criticized for not being European in ideal, of having fine conservative (by which I do NOT mean old-fashioned or tired) works pilloried for not being radical. Let [these works] encourage us to look for American excellence in American music.”¹²⁷

Mennin’s final composition was his one-movement Concerto for Flute and Orchestra, completed in 1983, the year of his death. The twenty-two minute work was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and premiered posthumously on 25 May 1988 with Zubin Mehta conducting. The instrumentation is the same as the Ninth with one fewer trumpet (three total) and with the solo flute replacing one of the ensemble flute parts.

¹²⁶ Andrew Stiller, "Recordings in Review (Mennin: Symphonies Nos. 8 and 9; Folk Overture)." *Musical America* v. 109 (1989): 57.

¹²⁷ Borroff, "Record Reviews — Peter Mennin; Symphony No. 8; Folk Overture; Symphony No. 9 (Columbus Symphony Orchestra; Christian Badea, Conductor) (New World)." 330-31.

Mennin died 17 June 1983 after a long battle with cancer; he was sixty years old.¹²⁸ In the fall, a memorial service was held for him at Juilliard. Joseph W. Polisi eventually replaced him as the school's President and a yearly *Peter Mennin Prize for Outstanding Achievement and Leadership in Music* was established in his memory.

¹²⁸ "Peter Mennin, Composer and Educator, Dies at 60," *Symphony* v. 34, no. 4 (1983): 60.