

CHAPTER V

OVERALL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Peter Goodman wrote in *Newsday* that Mennin “was one of this nation’s most important postwar composer-academicians.”¹⁴⁰ Mennin's prestigious musical positions and numerous commissions clearly prove his importance, as does his large output of high-quality concert music including, in particular, his Fifth Symphony. It is unfortunate, then, that Mennin's music is not as celebrated as that of his American contemporaries, such as David Diamond, Roy Harris, Walter Piston, and William Schuman.

Although Mennin, as a composer, was no innovator and had no interest in current fads, he faithfully adhered to a traditional or "classical" technique within a twentieth-century idiom. Of course, this fact is probably most responsible for the immediate neglect of his works, but it is also what make his works endure today, since classicism tends to foster longevity. Additionally, Mennin's avoidance of the less accessible techniques, such as serialism, indeterminacy, or avant-gardism, presently make his music inviting to those who may not have a high tolerance for dissonant or experimental sounds. In particular, Symphony No. 5, which is representative of Mennin's least dissonant, middle style, is an excellent model for a new composition intended for a community orchestra and its audience. Consequently, Shaw's Symphony No.1 follows Mennin's approach to Symphony No. 5 in many ways.

¹⁴⁰ Peter Goodman, "A Fitting End to the Season," *Newsday*, 27 May 1988.

First, the durations of both symphonies are similar, lasting slightly over twenty minutes each. These concise lengths contribute to their work's accessibility. Accordingly, both symphonies contain a limited number of movements—three instead of the usual four. This odd-numbered plan, though, allows for directly contrasting sections: a brisk first movement, a slow and lyric second movement, and a fast-paced final movement.

Symphony No. 1 uses the same, fairly standard size orchestra as No. 5 and neither requires any special instrumentation, except for separate piccolo parts. To avoid potentially intimidating or alienating performers, there are no non-traditional elements in either work's notation, performance practices, or rhythms.

Perhaps the greatest similarity of both works is in their strong implementation of and, in many ways, reliance on twentieth-century counterpoint. Both use chromatic and modal themes that evolve and interact together. Both symphonies also use and develop recurring structural material: a motive in the first movement, a progression in the second, and a rhythm or motive in the third. These meticulously constructed components tie the sections of the works together and provide the performers and listeners with a clear and logical musical path. Finally, both works incorporate techniques with a high potential for dissonance, such as tone clusters, polychords, quartal harmony, pandiatonicism, and pantriadicism, in a harmonious fashion that thoroughly avoids any discordance from serialism or avant-gardism.

With the American compositional style having such a relatively brief history, older, perhaps overlooked, works need reevaluation and reintroduction into our repertoire; Mennin's Symphony No. 5 is one worthy example of this. Furthermore, new interest in and study of Mennin's music may also lead to new American works following

his symphonic tradition, such as Symphony No. 1 by David Shaw. In any event, Mennin's status as an American composer should be elevated to that of his contemporaries, particularly because of a steadfast adherence to both individuality and convention.

In the words of Dr. Mennin: "I write music. If audiences do not understand me immediately they will later, maybe never, but first I must satisfy myself...With the passage of time, all that really counts is the final musical result. To the committed composer, all other matters are peripheral."¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Peter Mennin, as quoted in Svejda, notes to *Moby Dick; Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7*

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- "\$1000 Well Spent." *Time*, 17 April 1950, 88.
- Ayers, Mary Jane Bowles. "The Major Choral Works of Peter Mennin." DMA, University of Miami, 1982.
- Bernheimer, Martin. "A Mennin Premiere in Pasadena." *Los Angeles Times*, 24 November 1986, 1,7.
- Borroff, Edith. "Record Reviews — Peter Mennin; Symphony No. 8; Folk Overture; Symphony No. 9 (Columbus Symphony Orchestra; Christian Badea, Conductor) (New World)." *American Music* v. 9, no. 3 (1991): 330-31.
- Bracey, Judson Frank. "The Canzoni of Peter Mennin : A Comparative Analysis with Reference to the Form of the Historical Canzona." M.M., Ohio University, 1977.
- Butterworth, Neil. *The American Symphony*. Aldershot England ; Brookfield Vt.: Ashgate, 1998.
- Carrington, Mark. "'for the Sake of Art': A Talk with Peter Mennin." *Symphony* v. 34 (1983): 40-41.
- Corigliano, John, Fredell Lack, Albert Hirsh, Barry Snyder, David Diamond, Benjamin Lees, and Peter Mennin. *American Violin Sonatas by Corigliano, Diamond, Lees, Mennin*. CD. California: Bay Cities, 1990.
- Cowell, Henry. "Review of Mennin's Symphony No. 5." *Musical Quarterly* v. 37, no. 2 (April 1951): 248-51.
- "Current Biography." ed. Charles Moritz. New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1964.
- Dicus, Howard. *Clef's Notes*: May 17, 1998. United Press International, 17 May 1998. Accessed 17 March 2003. Newswire. Available from http://mcc-b114.monroecc.edu:2057/cgi-bin/cw_cgi?fullRecord+19196+6566+1:2763591+1+14.

- Ewen, David. *American Composers a Biographical Dictionary*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982.
- Faulkner, Dewey. "Recordings in Review." *Yale Review* v. 89 (2001): 167-77.
- Goldman, Richard F. "Symphony No. 3: Peter Mennin." *Musical Quarterly* v. 35 (January 1949): 111-115.
- Goodman, Peter. "A Fitting End to the Season." *Newsday*, 27 May 1988, 11.
- Hall, David. "Review: Symphonies: No. 3; No. 7. Concertato, "Moby Dick"." *Stereo Review*, May 1997, 99.
- Hendl, Walter. "The Music of Peter Mennin." *Juilliard Review* Spring (1954): 18-25.
- Highwater, Jamake. "New on CD: Bruckner to Barber from Chamber Music to Symphonies, Recent Choices Are Broad Recordings: Reviews." *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 August 1989, 11.
- Holland, Bernard. "Peter Mennin, Juilliard President and Prolific Composer, Dies at 60." *New York Times*, 21 June 1983.
- Holst, Gustav, Frederick Fennell, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Peter Mennin, Vincent Persichetti, and H Owen Reed. *Suites 1 & 2 / Folk Song Suite / Toccata Marziale*. Polygram Records, 1999.
- Ives, Charles, Howard Hanson, William Schuman, Peter Mennin, and Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra. *Hanson Conducts Ives, Schuman & Mennin*. sound recording. New York: Polygram Records, 1991.
- Johnson, Bret. "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): 58-60.
- Kaufman, Jeffrey. *About Phoenix USA*. Accessed 13 April 2003. Available from <http://www.phoenixcd.com/About/>.
- Kelly, Earl E. "The Piano Music of Peter Mennin." M.M., Kent State University, 1964.
- Kenyon, Nickolas. "Musical Events." *New Yorker* v. 57 (1981): 148.
- Keystone Wind Ensemble, Curt Scheib, Jack Stamp, Morton Gould, Peter Mennin, Norman Dello Joio, Paul Creston, Vincent Persichetti, Mark Camphouse, William Bergsma, and Timothy Mahr. *Dello Joio: Songs of Abelard...And Other World Premieres*. sound recording. North Hollywood, CA: Citadel, 1998.

Kohon String Quartet, William Schuman, Howard Hanson, Virgil Thomson, George Gershwin, Roger Sessions, Charles Ives, Peter Mennin, Walter Piston, and Aaron Copland. *American String Quartets 1900-1950*. sound recording. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: VoxBox, 1993.

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

Kurka, Robert, Janos Starker, Robert Whitney, Jorge Mester, Peter Mennin, Walter Piston, and Louisville Orchestra. *Kurka/Mennin/Piston: Orchestral Works*. sound recording. Albany, NY: Albany Records, 1995.

Machlis, Joseph. *Introduction to Contemporary Music*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1961.

Mennin, Peter. *Recordings of Works Commissioned by the Louisville Philharmonic Society for the Louisville Orchestra*. LP. Louisville, KY: Louisville Philharmonic Society, 1961.

_____. Notes to Peter Mennin, *Recordings of Works Commissioned by the Louisville Philharmonic Society for the Louisville Orchestra*. LP, Louisville Philharmonic Society LOU-613, 1961.

_____. *Allegro Tempestuoso (from Symphony No. 5), Arranged by Frank Benciscutto*. New York: Carl Fischer, 1982.

_____. *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians®. Centennial Edition*. Nicolas Slonimsky, Editor Emeritus. Schirmer, 2001. Accessed 29 March 2003. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: The Gale Group. 2003. Available from <http://www.galenet.com/servlet/BioRC>.

Mennin, Peter, Christian Badea, Recorded Anthology of American Music Inc, and Columbus Symphony Orchestra. *Symphony No. 8 ; Folk Overture ; Symphony No. 9*. sound recording. New York, NY: New World Records, 1992.

Mennin, Peter, Abraham Kaplan, Brian Priestman, Phyllis Curtin, Alberto Ginastera, Camerata Singers, Camerata Symphony Orchestra, Denver Symphony Orchestra, and Denver Symphony Orchestra (Denver Colo.). *Symphony No. 4, "the Cycle"*. CD. U.S.: Phoenix, 1994.

Mennin, Peter, David Alan Miller, and Albany Symphony Orchestra. *Fantasia for String Orchestra; Concertato, "Moby Dick"; Symphony No. 5; Symphony No. 6*. sound recording. Albany, NY: Albany Records, 1997.

Mennin, Peter, Dimitri Mitropoulos, John Ogdon, Igor Buketoff, Jean Martinon, New York Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and Chicago Symphony

Orchestra. Peter Mennin: Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7; Piano Concerto. sound recording. New York, NY: CRI, 1997.

Mennin, Peter, Gerard Schwarz, and Seattle Symphony Orchestra. Peter Mennin: Moby Dick; Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7. sound recording. Hollywood: Delos, 1996.

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

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

_____. Peter Mennin Symphonies. *Classical Net Review*, 1997. Accessed 3 March 2003. Available from <http://www.classical.net/~music/recs/reviews/a/alb00260a.html>.

Mountford, Richard D. *Canzona by Peter Mennin; an Analysis for Instruction and Performance*, 1972.

"No. 4." *Time*, 28 March 1949, 45.

NPR 100: Master List of Top 300 Songs. National Public Radio, 2003. Accessed 6 March 2003. Web Page. Available from <http://www.npr.org/programs/specials/vote/300list.html>.

Owens, David. "Composer Peter Mennin: An Interview." *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 and 30 July 1981.

"Peter Mennin." In *American National Biography*, v. 15, 310-11. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Peter Mennin List of Works. Carl Fischer Music Publishing, Accessed 3 March 2003. Web Page. Available from <http://www.carlfischer.com/menninworks.html>.

"Peter Mennin, Composer and Educator, Dies at 60." *Symphony* v. 34, no. 4 (1983): 60-61.

Pierce, Wayne Richard. "An Orchestral Transcription of Peter Mennin's Five Piano Pieces Based on a Study of His Early Works for Orchestra. (1942-1953)." D.M.A., University of Connecticut, 1999.

Rhoads, Mary Ruth Schneyer. "Influences of Japanese Hogaku Manifest in Selected Compositions by Peter Mennin and Benjamin Britten." Ph.D., Music Theory, Michigan State University, 1969.

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

- Ross, Alex. "Approaching the Finale of a Daring Era." *New York Times*, 27 January 1996, 13.
- Rutgers Wind Ensemble, and William Berz. *Transformations*. sound recording. Clarence, New York: Mark Custom Recording Service, 1999.
- Sabin, Robert. "A Choral Symphony by a Young American." *Musical America* v. 69 (April 15, 1949): 36.
- Schalk, Carl. "A Stylistic Analysis of the Christmas Story for Orchestra and Mixed Chorus by Peter Mennin." M.M., University of Rochester, 1957.
- Schiff, David. "The Tradition of the Oldie [National Public Radio's List of the Most Important American Works of the Twentieth Century]." *Atlantic Monthly* v. 287, no. 3 (2001): 97-8.
- Schonberg, Harold C. "Music: A New Mennin." *New York Times*, 22 November 1974.
- Simmons, Walter G. Notes to Peter Mennin, Symphony No. 8 ; Folk Overture ; Symphony No. 9. CD, New World Records, 1989.
- _____. Five Picks of the Year: 1997. 1997. Accessed 22 February 2003. Web Page. Available from <http://www.walter-simmons.com/articles/115.htm>.
- _____. Review of Mennin: Symphonies: No. 3; No. 7. Concertato, "Moby Dick" Delos De-3164. Originally from *Fanfare* magazine, 1997. Accessed 3 March 2003. Web Page. Available from <http://www.walter-simmons.com/articles/11.htm>.
- _____. Notes to Peter Mennin, Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7; Piano Concerto. CD, CRI CD741, 1997.
- Smith, Cecil. "Symphony No. 4 the Cycle--for a Chorus of Mixed Voices and Orchestra." *Notes* v. 6 (June 1949): 487-489.
- Snook, Paul. "Review: Mennin: Symphony No. 6; Riegger: Variations for Piano and Orchestra; Toch: Notturmo." *Fanfare* v. i/6 (1978): 125-7.
- Soria, Dorle J. "Artist Life." *High Fidelity/Musical America* v. 18 (November 1968): MA6-7.
- Stiller, Andrew. "Recordings in Review (Mennin: Symphonies Nos. 8 and 9; Folk Overture)." *Musical America* v. 109 (1989): 56-7.

Suttoni, Charles B. "Peter Mennin: The President of the Juilliard School Leads an Orderly Double Life as Composer and Academician." *Musical America* v. 30 (1980): MA4-5.

Svejda, Jim. Notes to Peter Mennin, *Moby Dick*; Symphonies Nos. 3 & 7. CD, Delos 3164, 1996.

Zeller, Gary Lee. "The Handling of Certain Metrical Devices in Selected String Quartet Music of Twentieth-Century American Composers." M.M., University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1965.